THE UNCERTAIN TRUMPET

A. S. M. HUTCHINSON

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By A. S. M. HUTCHINSON

The Happy Warrior

Once Aboard the Lugger

The Clean Heart

If Winter Comes

This Freedom

The Eighth Wonder
and Other Stories

One Increasing Purpose

The Uncertain Trumpet

THE UNCERTAIN TRUMPET

A. S. M. HUTCHINSON

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"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound,
who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

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PART I

THE UNCERTAIN TRUMPET

CHAPTER I

MISS MENTION COLLECTS SOME MATERIAL

THE marriage of Pelham Heritage took place at St. George's, Hanover Square, with every circumstance of dignity and decorum, and with no circumstance of latitude or (one incident excepted) frivolity. The fact of it being Pelham Heritage's wedding ensured all that. No one ever came to any sort of gathering assembled by Pelham Heritage with, so to speak, a button out of place or an air out of harness; Pelham Heritage had no fellowship among the kind of person who ever would show a button out of place or an air as of holiday.

This was his second marriage. His first twenty years before and dissolved by his wife's death fifteen years later, also had been at St. George's; and the opinion — for what it is worth — expressed by very old Lady Vestibule (Dowager Countess Vestibule) to her elderly companion (her elderly paid companion) Miss Mention, as they drove to the wedding, was that a man of a finer shade of taste would not have repeated espousal at the same altar.

"Though mind you," continued Lady Vestibule, who was a very old lady, thin as a rail, upright as a poker, brisk as a sparrow, and who vigorously nodded as she spoke the bright purple bonnet whose hue and style she had affected ever since first wearing its model at the coronation of Ed-

ward VII, "Though mind you, otherwise and in every other respect the man is *all* taste, a connoisseur of connoisseurs. It is his hobby, almost his profession. He is noted for it. He collects, you know; virtu stuff. Down at his place, Great House in Westonshire, he has some quite wonderful pieces. I lunched there once — oh, ten, a dozen years ago, during his first wife's lifetime — when I was staying at Piers Castle in the former baronet's time — his uncle, you know. The present Sir James Heritage — Jim Heritage as every one calls him — is the wildest young scapegrace that ever played ducks and drakes with a handsome fortune and an ancient home. They say that the goings-on at Piers nowadays reek to high heaven, scandal of the countryside and all that, and that no self-respecting woman will visit there. Not that that restricts Jim Heritage's house parties much, of course, because I do not know any one to-day who is self-respecting, in the modern generation, I mean, and as the word was understood in my time; and as young people nowadays never tell their parents whom they know or where they stay, much less ask their permission, I make no doubt Jim Heritage has as many blue-blooded wantons to mix with his muddy-veined wantons as he pleases. It is this modern cult of morals that helps him there, of course — no such words as Good and Bad, and Self-Determination is all that matters. Though why self-determination in those circles always determines itself in viciousness — vile manners, admiration for nastiness, rabbit morals and utter lawlessness — and never in virtue, never seems to occur to them. What was I telling you about?"

Elderly paid companion Miss Mention, who is as fat as a muffin and is wearing a remarkable hat uncommonly like one, reminds Lady Vestibule that she was speaking of a lunch at Great House, Pelham Heritage's country residence, taken while visiting at Piers Castle a dozen years ago; and reminds her, further, that mention of the lunch arose out

of reference to Pelham Heritage as connoisseur and collector and to the fine pieces he has brought together at Great House; and Miss Mention, it is to be remarked, is thus precise and particular in carrying back the thread of her employer's recollections because she hugs beneath her muffin hat the secret ambition of one day, when Lady Vestibule is safely dead — if she ever does die — bounding into wealth and fame as the author of a volume — several volumes, the way the Vestibule tongue runs on — of intimate, scandalous and entirely diverting revelations of high life compounded from the reminiscences for the hearing of which, much more than for any other quality of a paid companion, Lady Vestibule, unable to find patient listeners among her friends, employs her and salaries her.

"When you lunched at Great House," repeats Miss Mention, and puts her mental eye beneath her muffin hat to the heading, "A Lunch at Great House (Pelham Heritage)", to be inscribed that night in her manuscript book beneath the light above her dressing table, which is the desk at which the ecstasies and agonies of authorship are entertained by her.

"Ah, yes," responds Lady Vestibule, setting again into motion the bonnet that Edward VII might have seen, "one of those quite ghastly lunches, you know, where the china dish you are eating from, and the silver-gilt forks you are eating with, are supposed to interest you infinitely more than the food you get with them; which it never did me and never will if I live, as I shall, to a hundred; and which, the food, I mean, is as indifferent as the appointments are marvellous; and where, if you tilt your chair forward, as always has been my habit and is to this day, as you know, agony beads on your host's brow that you are going to slip and break the legs that Chippendale or some one made, he keeps on telling you, with his very own hands. Detestable! Virtu stuff is all right under a glass case or ranged

along the wall, but when every single thing you touch is a 'piece' and is wiped with a velvet cloth after you have touched it——"

Lady Vestibule indicates her attitude towards such with an expressive pause; and Miss Mention, disappointed of the personalia for which she hungers, adroitly rams into the pause an interrogatory which, as she hopes, will head her back to better material for the manuscript.

"And the Mrs. Pelham Heritage of that time, his first wife," she says, "was she as interested——"

"Oh, God bless you, no, poor creature," nods Lady Vestibule. "They were a misery and a terror to her, all those cherished things of her husband's that you had to hold your breath to look at for fear you might breathe on them. She literally did hold her breath on that account sometimes, I believe, poor soul, while he was watching her, she was so frightened of him. He killed her, you know."

The muffin leaps from the middle of Miss Mention's head to one side of her head with the start she gives and with the leap of her brain towards the manuscript book hidden at the bottom of her locked trunk. "Killed her!" Miss Mention exclaims, hoping for the worst—arsenic poisoning? a hatchet?—but not daring to believe such good fortune. "Killed her? You mean, of course——"

"All the Heritages kill their wives," pronounced Lady Vestibule.

She made this remarkable statement precisely in the calm and matter-of-fact tone of one construing Caesar's "Gallic War." "All Gaul," wrote Julius Caesar passionlessly, "is divided into three parts." "All the Heritages," pronounced Lady Vestibule, unmoved, "kill their wives. This Pelham's uncle," she continued, wagging the purple bonnet in new animation, "the former baronet, waited till fifty-five to marry and then neglected his wife to death. His brother, Pelham's father, after his first wife died—she

died a natural death, for a Heritage wife, was killed hunting — married again, just as the son is doing to-day, took to drink — one Heritage in every generation drinks — and drank her into her grave. Pelham himself badgered his first in, fussing with his virtu stuff and with his punctilious fads and ways. Another uncle, Hugo, dead now, nagged his to death because he thought he knew more about household management than any woman ever born — the most maddening trait, in my opinion, that a husband can possess; I would rather be married to a wife-beater any day. In my opinion, Mention, and mind you, I am nearly ninety and I have seen everything, a man who knows the price of any domestic article whatever, from a coal scuttle to a pound of sugar, ought to be struck with a poleaxe and buried in the cellar. A man who ——"

Miss Mention straightens her muffin with a hand and her employer's deflection from reminiscence with a question. "Has the present baronet, this Jim Heritage, as you say he is called — this Pelham Heritage's first cousin he would be, I suppose — has he killed a wife?"

"He has not. He is unmarried. I have heard it told of him that he is fond of saying that he can get all he wants out of matrimony without signing the register for it, and I can believe it of him; the kind of thing the young rogue would say — and practise. He said it once in public — at the Flogg-Wallopers it was; they are the big hunting family down there, you know — to Pelham Heritage, to his face; and said it, the young scamp — he cannot be more than twenty-six or so, I suppose — for the pleasure of seeing the opposite emotions that it caused Pelham battling *on* his face; and it was a sight, they tell me!"

Lady Vestibule gives a hoot of laughter at imagination of the sight it must have been, and Miss Mention a squirm of rapture at anticipation of her manuscript pages to-night, and then a question the better to illuminate them.

"*Opposite* emotions?" she questions. "Opposite? Disgust, from what you tell me of Mr. Pelham Heritage, at such a coarse remark, I can perfectly understand, and admire; but what other?"

"Why, my good Mention," Lady Vestibule returned sharply, "*joy,* of course — joy, relief, expectation, whatever you like to call it. Pelham Heritage is the heir-presumptive — do not you understand? — to the title, to the lands — nearly all entailed, luckily for him — to Piers and all that therein is, some fine Old Masters, some noble plate, and *not* entailed, and this young rip Jim selling it off by the bagful to finance his racing stables and all his other abominations. They say that all the Jews have taken out season tickets to Piers, they go there so often. Naturally, to hear him declare that he never proposed to marry would make Pelham ——"

"Oh, I *see,*" breathed Miss Mention, swooning almost with the ecstasy of these dramatic contributions to her manuscript.

"See? Of course you see," retorted Lady Vestibule. The car turned into the Harewood Place approach to Hanover Square and she stabbed a long finger, heavy with Victorian rings, towards St. George's, the congestion of cars outside it, the throng of gapers on either side of the red carpet leading up to it. "That unfortunate Pelham Heritage waiting in there has been heir-presumptive all his life, and he is fifty now if he is a day, to art treasures that make his virtuoso mouth water. Heir-presumptive after his father died while his uncle was at Piers; cup dashed from him when the old man married and this scapegrace Jim was born; heir-presumptive again when Jim's father died, which was just when Jim came twenty-one; and heir-presumptive now, torn between two agonies — one that Jim will marry and double-cross him, as these gibberish crook plays say, by begetting a son and heir; and the other

that, at the rate Jim is going at present, there will not be an Old Master or a gold plate left in Piers, even if Jim never does marry, breaks his neck in a steeplechase or gets shot by some woman's husband, and he ever does come into the title. That is Pelham Heritage's position."

"I call it," pronounces Miss Mention, "most, most *romantic*. It is like a novel. And the bride?"

The car slowed into the tail end of the long line waiting to set down at the church. A few precious moments remained for the feeding of Miss Mention's manuscript; and Miss Mention, pen already virtually in hand on these romantic disclosures, was feverish to make the most of them. "And the bride?" she repeated.

Lady Vestibule brought back the purple bonnet from the position in which she had been regarding the offside pavement as they drew into the near. "I consider that very remarkable," she declared, "the similarity between those two little old men just crossing the road towards us. Really, so alike in a Tweedledum and Tweedledee sort of fashion that they might be brothers, but one in need of the doctor and one chubby as a schoolboy. The rosy one is Admiral Bratton, a widower; perhaps that is why he looks so jolly. I knew his wife's family slightly and detested them. They were from the north and said cassle when they meant castle, a thing I hate. They don't say passle when they mean parcel. He came into money not long ago and retired on the strength of it and bought a little place quite near Pelham Heritage to set up as the country gentleman. Quorn Flogg-Walloper told me that he is one of the keenest riders in the hunt and quite the worst. The other little man, the tired-looking one, is the family solicitor, Mr. Custom. I have only seen him once, at Piers, at the late baronet's funeral, but I never forget a face and I never forget a name and I am eighty next year. He has aged greatly. He used to be as youthful-looking as the Admiral. I can believe

that trying to keep pace with Jim Heritage's affairs would age any one. He ought to be in bed. I shall tell him so if I see him. I think that young clergyman running up the steps has a very striking face. I remember it. He used to be one of Father Absolute's young men. Now I wonder what connection he can have with the family? Perhaps with the bride's. Father Absolute——"

Miss Mention, her manuscript and herself avalanched beneath this flood, clutches at the word "bride's" as one drowning at a rescuer. "The bride; yes. You were saying about the bride just now that——"

Lady Vestibule having said nothing whatever on the subject could be gripped no better than that; but it was sufficient. Returning the purple bonnet from the direction of the young clergyman who had been one of Father Absolute's young men, she set it in motion towards the muffin with those vigorous nods which the author brain beneath the muffin well knew betided gossip, and pulsed to hear.

"He met her in Rome," nodded Lady Vestibule. "I have never seen her. I hear that she is very young, little more than twenty, and very lovely. I think her name lovely —Dawn. You saw it on the invitation card—'Dawn Chase, daughter of the late—' Yes, Dawn certainly is very sweet. Her——"

"Too fanciful in my judgment," pronounces Miss Mention, whose own name is Harriett and whose judgment on the point is therefore perhaps a little warped.

"Her father," continued Lady Vestibule, ignoring this, "was one of the Chases of Sherbrook, a Navy family, and wild, all of them, as young colts. The Hell-Chasers they have always been known as in the service. Her father was the last of them—I remember it being said at the time that hell refused to take any more—and the wildest. Her mother was of a very old Sicilian family, an only child and quite lovely—very fair; and a lovely fair Sicilian *is* lovely,

I can assure you. She was spending the summer with her parents — Cónte and Contéssa Riccini, that was the name —on an island they owned off their coast somewhere. Young Chase's ship was cruising there and he got to know her and used to swim off at night and make love to her. I believe he carried his clothes on his head; but I know the parents' story was that they caught their daughter in the arms of a naked man, and there was a row such as even a Hell-Chaser had never raised before; and they caught *him* and kept him and sent him back to his ship in a fruit boat tied up in a net, and bribed the boatman to put a sail over it and have him hoisted up over the side as a present to the captain, and he was court-martialed for absence without leave, and the story got into the papers, and when he came home a journalist tried to interview him and young Chase hit him in the eye and there was another row. He left the service after that, coming into his mother's few pounds, and then came back to Italy again and picked up with the girl in Naples and eloped with her. He took her to Dartmoor and they lived there, breeding ponies and hunting and worshipping one another and worshipping this Dawn when she was born to them. When she was about sixteen the parents were both killed in a motor accident. Her grandparents, these Riccinis, her only relatives, sent for her and took her to fill their stolen daughter's place. They had idolized their daughter, and with her raping from them had conceived a crazy hatred of everything English, brigands as they called them; and this Dawn, so I am told, living in the best society in Rome and all that, after she left the convent school they put her to, was never allowed to meet any English, particularly an Englishman. Pelham Heritage fell in with them in Rome. They admitted him for some reason, something to do with some pictures of theirs on which he is an authority, I believe, though well they might have received him in any case — he is about as

far from the brigand type of Englishman they hate as it is possible to get; and I believe he was, actually, the first Englishman this Dawn had ever met since she was fetched away from her native land. No doubt that was her attraction towards him. If she is as English as her father was, I imagine she would fall for, as these Americans say, an Englishman and the chance of getting back to England even if ——"

The car has reached the red carpet, a commissionaire has opened the door; and Lady Vestibule, who moves quickly and who never keeps a servant waiting, is out and briskly in ascent of the steps, Edward VII bonnet nodding, Victoria walking cane punctuating, at a speed that causes Miss Mention, who moves slowly and who always keeps servants waiting in order that they may realise that she is to be waited on, enormous inconvenience in execution of the important object she now has in view. Discharging herself upon the commissionaire, who staggers, Miss Mention pounds up under the muffin hat like a super-animated tortoise after an electric hare, bulges herself between her employer and the Press representative who stands at the door noting names, and, thrusting the muffin into his face, informs him in a swift and indistinguishable gabble "Dowgecountsvetbule," and in a measured and very clear articulation "and Miss Mention, M-e-n-t-i-o-n, *Mention.*"

She has succeeded in her object.

They go in.

CHAPTER II

PELHAM HERITAGE ACQUIRES A RARE PIECE

By no standard an unusually large company of guests is assembled in the church; but by every standard it is, as has been premised, a dignified and decorous company that absorbs Lady Vestibule and Miss Mention as they are conducted to their places.

Faces are turned to them. Lady Vestibule nods and smiles genially to the faces; Miss Mention, not to be considered unknown in this assembly, bows and smiles sedately to imaginary faces in distant quarters of the congregation. Lady Vestibule, because, out of the age in such matters, she associates a church, even at a wedding, with prayer, goes immediately upon her knees; and because, as she has been heard to say, she has experienced life for nearly eighty years and knows what life can be, prays, very earnestly, for the happiness of "this child called Dawn" — whom she has never even seen. Miss Mention, because the eyes of the world are upon her, sits bolt upright, balancing her muffin hat with conscious dignity of deportment; and because, like a born author, she is already framing in her head the sentences she will frame with her pen this evening, makes ready a further question (if there is time) which shall supplement and round off the Heritage information already collected. Lady Vestibule, risen from her knees and settled, imparts to her neighbour on her other side in a very loud whisper, "This is the fifty-sixth wedding I have attended in this church and I have followed the funerals of most of 'em!"

Miss Mention, snatching her chance while it offers, nestles the muffin hat against the purple bonnet and inquires in a very confidential whisper, "Are there any other men Heritages besides this one and the baronet Jim one?"

Lady Vestibule's lips protrude towards the ear beneath the lower surface of the muffin. "This one's brother, half-brother, by second wife, you know; much younger, of course; called Banjo."

Muffin scrapes excitedly around the edge of bonnet. "Called *what?*"

"Called Banjo — Banjo Heritage."

"What an extraord——"

"Mother, poor soul — husband drinking her into her grave, you know — christened him Benjamin, 'her Benjamin' kind of idea; used to call him Benjie; child pronounced it Banjie; father made it Banjo; stuck ever since."

"Extraordinary! Married?"

Bonnet by sharp friction of muffin indicates negation.

"What does he do?"

"Drinks — one in every generation, you know."

Eyes beneath muffin upturn in expression of dismay; lips beneath eyes hiss under bonnet, "No profession?"

"Studied medicine; don't know if qualified; does not practise, anyway; lives in cottage almost at Great House gates just to annoy Pelham; Pelham loathes him. Hish!"

"Has he——?"

Bonnet bangs down on muffin: "*Hish!*" Muffin quivers in ecstatic anticipation of to-night's manuscript and returns to erect dignity, marred by slight trembling as of authorship in convulsion.

Tremulously also, reason of Lady Vestibule's sharp *Hish!*, are stealing through the aisles faint, faintest notes, swelling now, now swelling louder yet, of organ. A man, appearing as it seems from nowhere, moves to the chancel

steps; a man of good height, spare, slightly stooping with the student's stoop; of face something of the Latin type, sombrely sallow, finely chiselled, thin-nosed, sensitive-mouthed; another man with him.

The pair turn and look down the church. Every one turns and looks down the church.

Miss Mention, staring towards Pelham Heritage the better to impress his lineaments upon the memory centres beneath the muffin hat, turns last and, to her vexation, turns late. She cricks her neck in turning, and that perhaps upsets her, accounts for her confused, absurd impressions.

The bride is almost at her elbow when, thus cricked, she turns. She catches a delusion (so she terms it) of a thing ethereal, a sprite, a fay; of slightly parted lips, of wide grey eyes, of tiptoe, shy expectancy. Within the solid pudding stuff beneath the muffin hat she feels grotesque illusions of having glimpsed, as in a mist (her veil, good Mention, her veil!) a fawn, quick, timid, eager, exquisite, alert, sensing the morning, poised to spring away.

This child called Dawn.

It is her freedom in her darling England that, sensing thus eagerly, she sniffs.

A secretary of the Italian Embassy conducts her up the aisle; and the Italian Embassy circle has provided the first of the two pairs of bridesmaids who support her. Her grandparents, Miss Mention would have been interested to know, abating their hatred of the brigand race not sufficiently themselves to touch the brigand shores, have countenanced this second raid upon their treasure sufficiently to have their child given away as befits their station; but "Foreigners!" inwardly snorts Miss Mention, apostrophising the Embassy maids, straightening her cricked neck, and glad of a wholesome snort to correct her silly fantasies about the bride. "Foreigners!" and looks upon the second pair. English, these; pretty and well aware that they are

pretty; modern to the colour on their lips and proud to be modern. Penelope and Cynthia Waring, Miss Mention, one time and for two or three years only, wards of Pelham Heritage, daughters of an old friend of his, and scoffing now, as you can see for yourself, all this assembly of their erstwhile guardian's friends, for whom, as for their former guardian himself, they have, they say, no use.

Well, nor have Mentions use for them. "Perts!" is Miss Mention's comment and she straightens out her neck again.

There is singing; after the singing shuffling; after the shuffling stillness. Into the stillness pronouncement, moving upon the stillness with firm, irrevocable tread.

"... *to join together this Man and this Woman* ..."

That is the purpose of this solemn tread.

"... *not by any to be enterprised, nor taken in hand unadvisedly, lightly* ..."

That is a sound of warning in this firm and fateful step.

A bishop is marrying them. Pelham Heritage, whose wedding naturally would be a St. George's, Hanover Square wedding, as naturally would have a bishop; and the bishop naturally would be his Bishop of Westonbury whom Pelham Heritage knows as a personal acquaintance — his residence of Great House, Ashton Parva, near Laversham, Westonshire, is in the Westonbury diocese — and who knows Pelham Heritage as a sound and generous churchman, zealous member of his Diocesan Council of Laymen, supporter of good works, patron of the living of Malford Regis, which is another of the little group of villages that have Laversham for their nearest town.

"... *Thirdly it was ordained* —" the slow, irrevocable steps are treading on "— *for the mutual society, help and comfort that the one ought to have of the other* ..."

This child called Dawn, that eager fawn within the misty

veil, turns those grey eyes beneath their heavy fringes to seek her partner's eyes; but he is looking before him, steadily, devoutly.

Canon Elder of the Parish Church of Laversham is supporting the bishop, and the pair are assisted by a nervous-looking little vicar who appears to have lost something and himself to be badly in need of assistance without it. This is the Reverend Mr. Keepsake, vicar of that Malford Regis which is in the bridegroom's gift, and it is his head that he has lost.

Mr. Keepsake has been steadily working himself into a fever of mingled anticipation and apprehension ever since, weeks before, he was first commanded for this performance; and in the upshot, bewildered by these impressive surroundings of St. George's, awed by the bishop, never at his ease with the canon, and always at his worst with his patron, he has done for himself at the outset by in some mysterious way getting into the wrong place, and is spending the entire service in trying, quite unsuccessfully, to slip into the right one, moving furtively when in advance and at full speed when, detected, in retreat, and creating thereby the remarkable impression either of hunting for something or of hopping about in performance of some mysterious rite entirely his own and exceedingly elaborate and complicated.

"*I, Dawn, take thee, Pelham, to be . . .*"

Her own feet now are in the prints that tread these steps irrevocable. His feet, treading them also, had sounded firmly, resonantly through the aisles. Hers are hushed, stealing, tiptoe, tense. Mention, in that crick-necked kind of dream she had, might have expected that expectant fawn she saw to speak with just such notes — bated, the breath caught in ecstasy at the ecstatic prospect that she sees before her; and speech, rapt, tremulous, made on the catch.

Most of the county families around the Laversham district are represented in the congregation—the decorous, older-generationed families, that is to say; families such as are known down there as the Piers Castle set or the Flogg-Walloper set obviously would not be here; for one thing they would not be invited, for another they would not be away from their homes to-day for any invitation short of a royal command: it is the last day of the cubbing season (Forrardon Hunt) and at this very moment they are all—all those sets—cubbing. Admiral Bratton, whom Lady Vestibule watched in, of course is of those sets and yet is here; but he is in with every set, known in each and known to all as "a good little chap"; and he is here, giving up the last day's cubbing, precisely because he is a good little chap—felt that because Pelham Heritage invited him Pelham Heritage wanted him, and that therefore, setting ardent wishes for horse and hound aside, he must come. Grey-headed, chubby little tub of a man, there he is, brimming over, as you can tell, with kindliness towards every one in general and, at this moment, towards the principals in this ceremony he is attending in particular; and looking forward (you may be told) to brimming up very shortly with champagne, when he will present himself as the only person in the world who would think of slapping Pelham Heritage on the back and using to him such language as, "Jolly good luck, old man! By gad, Heritage, you have picked a lovely peach!"

"*Forasmuch as Pelham and Dawn have consented together in*——"

That strong and fateful tread has reached its purpose now.

"*. . . I pronounce that they be Man and Wife together.*"

This child called Dawn moves, ever so slightly, her fingers in her husband's hand—the fawn nestling her

mate with whom she is to bound away, whose leadership has led her from her caging South to all this lovely England stretched out now before her. He firmly presses the soft confidence she gives him. She catches her breath, her prospect stirs her so.

Mr. Keepsake, horribly aware that a general move is now about to be made, wonders for the hundredth time if he can safely step backwards, tries, hits something, and in the effort to save himself, appears to have reached the peak as it were of his mysterious rites and to be performing an extraordinarily intricate balancing act at the supreme moment of which he catches Pelham Heritage's eye fixed upon him and decides, finally, that he will *not* go on to the reception.

Of locals other than the county families only a single representative is here — Miss Pasture, that rather unusually tall, big-limbed woman in badly fitting black, sitting not far in front of Mr. Custom, the solicitor, who Lady Vestibule said looked as if he ought to be in bed. Miss Pasture's black eyes are slightly protuberant in her strongly featured face; and they give the impression, somehow, of regarding all this business with a hostile air. She has come up from Ashton Parva where she lives with her mother, old Mrs. Pasture, specially for the wedding; but, though she knows Pelham Heritage well — she ran his house for him when his wards were there, and tried to run the wards, for quite some little time — she received no invitation.

The omission is perhaps the cause of her hostile look; the reason of her presence is that she was very anxious to see the bride.

Anxiety to be seen by the bridegroom is, on the other hand, the reason that brings Mr. Custom here. He *is* like Admiral Bratton in general build, as Lady Vestibule remarked; but an Admiral Bratton sick, in need of rest.

She was wrong, though, Lady Vestibule, in her conjecture at the reason of his fagged appearance. It is not trying to keep pace with Jim Heritage's goings-on, his sellings and his borrowings, that has given Mr. Custom that jaded air. It is trying to keep things going in his own affairs at a time of life when he had looked forward to retiring that is responsible for that; and the things he has to keep going are, principally, his wife and two daughters — that very smartly turned out trio, friends of the Waring girls, sitting well up in front. Admiral Bratton, who has retired and is rosy on it, is thinking of the coming champagne; Mr. Custom is thinking not only of the demands upon his income which prevent him retiring, but of the almost certain loss of that comfortable part of it which comes by way of the deed box marked "Sir James Heritage", should Pelham Heritage ever become Sir Pelham. Pelham Heritage has told him pretty roundly what he thinks of him for not better controlling wild Jim's wasting of his patrimony (control Jim Heritage!). That is why he is here, an hour snatched from the eternal round — in hope, on an occasion so auspicious, of reëstablishment in Pelham Heritage's regard. He must make a point of presenting himself to the heir-presumptive at the reception. He hopes, very much, that Miss Pasture, whom he has observed, is not coming on to it. She is always at him about that hopeless business of that absconded brother of hers.

"*. . . Whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well and are not afraid with any amazement.*"

It is finished. To whatever amazements may await her this child called Dawn is coming down the aisle upon her husband's arm. The faces turned towards her are to her in her happiness, in her freedom of her beloved England, literally a sea of faces, indistinguishable to her as the particles of the sea are indistinguishable one from another. Much dif-

ferent with Penelope and Cynthia Waring, those modern young women bringing up the rear, whose freedom is their right! They can see every face, sharp and detached as their ideas on life are sharp and clear. Penelope, brushing close past Mr. Custom's girls — her and her sister's only kindred spirits in that company — supplies that only touch of levity in all the ceremony to which reference has been made by swiftly shooting out at Mr. Custom's eldest the tip of her red tongue, expressive of her estimate of all her former guardian's friends and of herself in guise of dutiful ex-ward among them. Lil Custom shoots hers in response.

It is all over. To her amazements this child called Dawn, beheld of all, is passing — a fawn let loose; a vivid, ardent lovely thing upon whose lovely neck the knot just tied is, far from knot, the severing of cords that six long years have tied her out of England. "Amazements," oh, truest word, she thinks, for all she has in hope! *"And are not afraid with any amazement."* Afraid with such? What incongruity of term!

"And is there sea?" breathless almost, out in Rome, she had asked this man who astoundingly had come into her life to offer her release from cagement in those languorous Southern climes in which, thinking of England, she felt that she must suffocate. "Pelham — how dear to call you that, you who have rescued me! — is there sea where we shall live? — English sea that crashes in, grey English sea with grey mist on it that growls out to you all along the pebbles, even when it is smooth; how strong it is and how it loves you — dear, living, breathing English sea, not that blue, tideless, listless, lapdog Mediterranean stuff?"

He had smiled quietly at her craziness. "The sea is about thirty miles from Ashton by the best route," he had replied in his matter-of-fact way.

"Oh, nothing in a car!"

"It is quite an easy run in the car," he had agreed; and

she had sat enchanted, her mental eyes on that grey sea.

"What sea?" she then had shot at him.

"What sea? Oh, I follow you. It is the Atlantic ocean we get there. The moor goes down to it from——"

"Atlantic! Moor!"

She had struck her hands together in her glee. With those two words he had won her, though he had no idea of it, much more surely than with days of all his courtly phrasing towards her heart.

"And hunting?" had been her next.

She was to remember in time to come the something shadowlike that tinged his eyes at that quick question. At the moment only his reply concerned her, and enraptured her, "We are said to be in the heart of the hunting down there"; and at that she had cried out loud.

"Oh, English hunting! Those darling Irish horses, those dear English fields, those dear brown hedge and ditches! Oh, Pelham, let us go back to the Grandies now, at once, and tell them, and face them, and tell them, whatever they say, that it must, must be, and must be soon — soon, soon!"

The English sea, the English countryside, the English hunting field! Amazements? Yes, yes, amazements that ravished all her being!

"*And are not afraid . . .*"

This child called Dawn, almost now to the doors beyond which these enchantments lie, meets in that brief remaining space a thing astounding to her which gives her, if not fear, sense of astonishing discomfort. There suddenly is distinguishable to her upon that indistinguishable sea of faces, struck up among them as it had been a buoy thrown up where only misty sea had filled the gaze, a woman's face that stares upon her own — in hate. Its eyes, black, hard as stones, slightly protuberant, hold her own above a mouth twisted in bitterness. It astounds her. She has the idea,

afterwards, that she must have imagined it; how possible that any stranger should have stared upon her thus?

But she reddens, so basilisk the gaze appears to her, and contracts her fingers on her husband's arm, who feels the pressure and turns his head towards her; and a notable art dealer, observing his action, possessive, protective, passes to his companion, using facetiously the jargon of their trade, what may serve perhaps for the public estimate of this ceremony, ended now.

"I would say," says he to his friend, "that Pelham Heritage has acquired a rare piece."

CHAPTER III

BANJO HERITAGE AFFIXES A CUTTING

THE health of the bride and bridegroom was drunk, at the reception following the wedding, generally and decorously by those who were within hearing of Admiral Bratton when he proposed it, and privately and genially by the same proposer when for a few moments he got the couple to himself; but it had already been drunk, deeply if lightly, quite an hour earlier and within a mile of the house at which Pelham Heritage and Dawn would mostly spend their married life.

Proposer and supporter of the toast were in this case one. They were united in the person of that Mr. Banjo Heritage summarised by Lady Vestibule as Pelham's "half-brother — drinks — lives almost at gates of Great House just to annoy him — Pelham loathes him"; and the words of his toast, drunk deeply because he liked his drinks deep, and lightly because he maintained always a kind of whimsical detachment in his attitude towards his half-brother, were:

"Well, here's to dear brother Pelham, bless him; and here's to you, you lovely kid; and what the dickens you are doing with the likes of Pelham, or going to do in that mausoleum" — he nodded his head towards the chimneys of Great House, visible beyond the trees from where he sat — "the dickens himself only knows — and probably knows damn well."

He drank.

Then he sighed the sigh of a man who has wanted a

drink badly and has had it; set down the glass beside him; placed his elbows on his knees, a newspaper in his hands; and in that position resumed the profound regard upon two portraits, captioned above "To-day's Wedding", and below "Mr. Pelham Heritage and Miss Dawn Chase", which he had interrupted in order fittingly to salute them. He was sitting in warm sunshine on the doorstep of his picturesque half-timbered old cottage, his back against the fine oak slab that was the door; and he presented himself as a slim, rather pale, entirely pleasant-looking young man of some eight and twenty. A guess at his age, he was fond of betting drinks on it, invariably gave him five or six years fewer than that; a guess at his calling might have placed him — and the shot had been made more than once — some kind of dreamer, a painter, a writer, a poet; and, if only as with all idlers, he certainly dreamt dreams.

He was dreaming now as he gazed upon the face of her who at that hour was becoming his half-brother's wife. He had happened upon it quite unexpectedly as he was glancing over the paper; and not till some minutes after that, so intently had he been occupied with it, had he noticed, with a mild raising of his brows, his brother's face beside it, and seen she was the bride at the wedding he knew to be taking place that day.

His gesture, merely that mild opening of his eyes, was expressive of the little emotion aroused in him by the discovery that one whose face had so attracted him was to be mated with one whom, regarding with amusement, it amused him to annoy by squatting at his gates. The position was that it was nothing to Banjo Heritage what Pelham Heritage did, fell dead or won a fortune, married a freak or married such a lovely thing as this. Banjo Heritage would have gone nearer to regret, indeed (though nowhere near it) at news of misfortune to his half-brother, than to any approach to sourness at news of triumph. Were Pelham to

fall dead, his comment, unmoved, would have been, "Ah, well, I daresay he was not such a bad chap, after all." Here was visual intelligence of Pelham having acquired (as the art dealer said) a rare piece; and his emotion, unmoved, was merely the raising of his brows.

Emotion much more real, though of the stuff that idle fantasy is made of, had been stirred in him by the girl's face, seen, not as Pelham's wife, but solely as a face is seen in passing, belonging to another life, touching the life of one that views and passes it no more than touches it a picture on a wall. He had a deep sense of beauty; better phrased than that, he had senses that were deeply aroused by beauty. They were not the senses that perfection of form arouses in the cultured taste (in the taste of such, for example, as Pelham); they were the senses such as a poet may have in composition, and with which, inspired, he composes. Beauty, whether of word, of figure, of place, of person, caused Banjo Heritage to see visions and to dream dreams; not sentimental dreams; loss of self and of the world, merely, in contemplation of that which touched the spirit.

This pictured face, immediately he came upon it, had set him through misty, delicious gropings, in search of a word; a word exactly descriptive of the contemplations upon which the face embarked him; a word which he knew to be but which he could not fix. Suddenly it had come to him — ethereal; and he had got up immediately from his doorstep and gone to his sitting room and to his few books there, an odd jumble of poets (almost his only reading) and medical textbooks (his one-time study) and had put out his hand, eagerly, for the slim, limp-bound volume that was his dictionary, a close abridgment of a famous work. He had a remarkable interest in words as words. He could, and often did, sit reading his dictionary as raptly almost as he read his poets, deriving strange pleasure from inter-

pretations (of sounds that gave visions to him) by a master hand.

The pages, of fine India paper, were well thumbed. He turned them, eagerly, to the place he sought and found his word. "Ethereal: light." Yes, but he could have said that for himself; that was not it. "Airy." No, nor that. Ah! "Of unearthly delicacy of substance."

Ah! That was the quality — unearthly delicacy of substance — that face suggested to him; those were the realms of fantasy to which that face transported him!

He had helped himself to a drink after that. When he was elevated, quite as much as when he was depressed (extremes of both were daily his visitants), was the moment that the desire to stimulate himself took hold of him. The hour, not yet midday of a lovely, outdoor morning, was a little early for it; but the hour of it had been very late last night: that was the reason for the desire (he had studied all the reasons, deploring them but admitting their cogency); and with, say, one more, he could carry on now, he knew, until the evening.

He prepared the one more glass, took it out with him to the doorstep, and resumed his study of the face. "Of unearthly delicacy of substance." That beautiful suggestion, beautifully phrased, exquisitely imaged in those features, had set his mind groping, as previously it had groped for "ethereal", for yet another phrasing of his contemplations. He knew that other; he knew it to be exact to what was here; but again, as with "ethereal", could not recall it. Something, this time, he was sure, in poetry. Something about a fawn, something about shimmering. What the dickens — ? No, he could not get it.

His senses were beginning to answer now to the stimulus he had dispatched to them. He experienced that assured, quickened, confident sensation that, thus stimulated, in-

variably they gave him; and it was beneath this influence that he made the toast which has been heard. Its transference of his attitude towards the picture from impersonal to personal, from selfless contemplation of matter "of unearthly delicacy of substance" to familiarity of, "and here's to you, you lovely kid"; its free and very slightly elevated terms, "and what the dickens you are doing with the likes of Pelham or going to do in that mausoleum"; especially the mounting extravagancy of its peroration, "the dickens himself only knows — and probably knows damn well", were characteristic of the effect upon him of his drink. Before, the face had been nothing to him except as beauty; now, it was personal to him, brought down from imagination to materialism, from shadow to substance, from art to life, from soul to body. Before, he had spoken of it with circumspection, stood before it, as it were, with head uncovered and with shoes removed; now, he spoke of it, to it, with carelessness, familiarity, slang.

He drained the toast.

The personal attitude was quickened now. Beneath the stimulus he had permitted his brother into his thoughts upon the face — "Here's to dear brother Pelham, bless him"; and when, thought of Pelham thus admitted, he returned his regard to the paper, he now included his brother's features with the features of his brother's bride. It was their striking contrast, the one sombre, purposeful, reserved, the other every opposite of these, that held him now; and held by that, he found himself suddenly with key in hand to that recess within his memory in which stood locked the image from some poet for which he had been searching. Something about a fawn? Something about shimmering? Yes, but the whole idea of the thing had been (this was the key) he now told himself, the setting off of shimmering — no, "glimmering" was the word; he was getting nearer now! — the setting off of the glimmer-

ing by something purposeful, darkling, as this countenance of Pelham's purposeful was and dark. He pondered. Purposeful? What purpose? That seemed to strike a note. It did — pursuit! That was the purpose. Yes, pursuit — of the fawn! He was getting it now! Pursuit, possession of the fawn, as that grave, purposed aspect of his brother's might be said to show capture, possession, ownership of this ethereal thing beside it. That was it! He almost had it now. What —— ?

Ah! he had it! He had the whole thing, chapter and verse. G. W. Russell was the poet, "Refuge" the poem; and the words —— !

Moved by their exquisite beauty, rapt by their perfect imagery in these two faces here before him, he spoke the words aloud, his eyes upon the faces that gave them back to him.

> "Twilight, a timid fawn, went glimmering by,
> And Night, the dark-blue hunter, followed fast."

He sat a long time thus. Beauty, impersonal beauty, that of the poet's conception, and of its visual rendering to him by these two faces, each face its own line — hers Twilight, the timid fawn; his Night, the following hunter — held him entranced. Then, impetuously as he had risen in quest of his dictionary, impetuously he rose and went in to his table at his room, the paper in his hand.

He very rarely wrote, but everything on his table was laid out ready for writing with the scrupulous precision and arrangement, one article against the other, of a very neat man. He had a strongly developed sense of order. He took up a pair of scissors, cut out the portraits in one piece, leaving above them the wide margin at the paper's top, and with his pen wrote on the margin, immediately above the pictures, and in his small, clear characters, the words that imaged them, and that they imaged.

" Twilight, a timid fawn, went glimmering by,
And Night, the dark-blue hunter, followed fast."

It gave him immense pleasure to write down a thought so exquisite. He anticipated deep and constant pleasure from absorption in the thought as written, in the presentment of it underneath. Absorption of that nature was the sole thing in life that really gave him pleasure. He had lost, he had been heard to say, the capacity for happiness.

He took up two drawing pins and with them affixed the cutting to the oak panelling of the wall, one pin above, one below. It would have fidgeted him to see it hanging listless, forlornly, by a single pin; on the other hand he could not have abided to have seen it starred with a pin at each corner, jammed up thusly as a football hero in a schoolboy's study.

He stood a few moments in the absorption he had promised himself; then he turned sharply out of it and away from it and looked at his watch.

"I will take a free lunch off the Flogg-Wallopers," he said. "Breakfast, they will call it; they will have been cubbing since early."

He went out alertly to the shed he called his garage, opened one half of the doors and, because the stimulation of his drinks was still within him, cranked up his two-seater car with the starting handle instead of using the button; then went back to the other half-door.

"Paddock!" he called across the garden as he unbolted it, then began easing it backward in correction of the list that it had taken. "Paddock! Where the dickens is that — Dash this door. *Paddock!*"

A short little man with a grotesquely large fair moustache upon a beaming face came briskly trotting, elbows to sides as if doubling on a regimental parade ground, around the side of the house. He was in his shirt sleeves because he had been digging; but he wore, although he had

been digging, a well brushed bowler hat, a smartly groomed blue suit, a very large gold watch chain, and a very dirty linen collar.

Paddock, who, with his wife, Mrs. Paddock, "did for" Banjo, living in a rabbit hutch of their own across the way and attending daily for their tasks, hers in the kitchen, his about the house and in the garden, was, in Banjo's description of him, a mad little ass, crazy with futile enthusiasms. The enthusiasms were new duties, that is to say, any sort of duty to which he might be called away from the duty upon which he happened to be engaged at the moment, so long as he *was* called away; the futility was his gross and entire incompetence in any kind of task whatsoever; and the madness and the craziness were the transports of enthusiasm in which, while the new task was yet in prospect only, he would assure his employer (whomsoever that might be) that the task in question was the one task for which he was born, and that he brought to it, not only the experience of a lifetime, but a natural and almost uncanny aptitude dowered within him at his birth.

He had had many employers. All who remembered him, and most, with prejudice, did, spoke of him by the same terms — "That Paddock." He had been in the army, employed as a batman, during the South African war; and, taking his discharge thereafter, had continued as batman in the civil guise of valet up to the time, some years before, of his engagement in that office by the Sir Cropp Flogg-Walloper, to whose hunt breakfast Banjo now was bound. This calling of man-servant accounted for his strikingly neat appearance, marred always by a strikingly dirty collar; and his retirement from that profession, his growth of his astonishing moustache, and his purchase of the freehold of his rabbit hutch, were accounted for by his discharge from the service of Sir Cropp, a hot-blooded man, with great physical violence, and by the damages which, in com-

pensation, Sir Cropp, after a series of point-blank refusals carried ultimately to the House of Lords (Paddock *v.* Flogg-Walloper, now a leading precedent in domestic compensation law) was forced to pay him. His crazy enthusiasm for his prospects as landed proprietor and market gardener outrunning the income available to support them, he had been glad, when Banjo established himself in the little house near by, to enter himself, together with his wife, in that daily attendance upon a single gentleman's small residence, grounds, car, cob and whatnot, for which, with tears of enthusiasm in his eyes, he had assured Banjo that he had yearned and had been sedulously equipping himself ever since he was a tiny little boy of ten, sir.

With passionate enthusiasm — he had been digging for full eighteen minutes and was bone weary of it — he now came trotting to Banjo's call in expectation of welcome change; but he was dashed; it was no more than the conveyance of a message to his wife in the kitchen that he found himself thus summoned to receive.

"Tell Mrs. Paddock," said Banjo, still trying to coax the garage door, "that I shall not be in to lunch and that she can hot up that bit of beef for my supper."

"Dinner, sir. Yes, very good, sir," corrected and agreed Paddock, watching the refractoriness of the door with glistening eyes of a born carpenter aching to be told to bring his tools to its persuasion.

"Call it what you like," Banjo returned brusquely. He was getting impatient with the door; he knew himself very quickly impatient when he had two or three drinks inside him. "So long as you remember to say hotted——"

"Grilled, sir," amended Paddock, eyes glistening yet more appealingly at the door, but quick with new enthusiasms for the dish. "Grilled with nice brown baked potatoes, and a little onions around it, sir, and a nice——"

"Hotted and not cold," concluded Banjo, who had learnt

to let Paddock's ecstasies flood unheard. "Paddock, why the devil does this door keep dropping even when the hinge——"

Paddock wetted his lips. If there was a thing he loved it was abuse of, so to speak, his tools; abuse of everything, from the garden to the car, from his blacking brushes to his window-cleaning rags, which he was called upon to handle. Passionately as he yearned to be called to correction of the door, more passionately enjoyed he, standing stiffly to attention, chin up, bowler hat back, arms in line with the sides, thumbs at seams of the trousers, letting fly at an object of his supervision.

"That door keeps dropping, sir, because that shed isn't fit to keep a lawn-mower in, leave alone a car, sir. That shed ought to be chopped down with an axe, sir, and cut up for firewood, and then wouldn't light a gentleman's fire, sir, rotten damp as it is, sir. That shed, sir——"

"Get out of the way," said Banjo, swinging back at last the door and kicking a stop against it.

He glanced up, at and around the structure. "I think it a mighty picturesque old shed. I wouldn't swop it for the hideous kind of garage you would choose, not with a tenner thrown in. Look at those old beams, look at those old window frames! Man alive, there are Americans would give a cheque half as big as the whole place cost me to cart those across the Atlantic and fix them into a——"

He entered the car and, twisting round to judge his direction, twisted also towards Paddock's shining face. "If only to goodness you would come in here say once in five years, I don't ask more, with a screwdriver and a——"

"Sir," burst out Paddock who, shot by the opening of the door from his position of attention in one quarter of the yard, had sprung into another position of attention immediately behind the car, and who not only now saw his chance of a new task but invariably wildly would support

that black was white if any employer said so, "Sir, I wouldn't have you change that shed, sir, not for a thousand pounds, sir. Sir, that shed is as picturesque a bit of work as you'd find from here to Malford Regis, sir. Sir, if one car stops here in a week to look at it, I'd say a dozen do, sir. Timbers like that, sir, were put up to stand for centuries, sir. I'll just run in and get my tool kit, sir, and——"

"Look out for yourself!" cried Banjo, and set foot hard on accelerator; and Paddock, with a wild leap for life, both feet together, looked out; and the car was through the gate, reversed, and streaming down the road towards the free lunch called by the Flogg-Wallopers, who had been cubbing, breakfast.

CHAPTER IV

THE FLOGG–WALLOPERS TAKE BREAKFAST

THE Flogg-Wallopers are a hunting family, mostly male, including the women. They live at Wallop Hall, Great Gallop, heart of the Forrardon country, and they live solely for hunting. In the off season the Flogg-Wallopers do not live, they exist. With the advancing breath of spring they disappear from Wallop Hall, as, with the advancing breath of winter, hibernating animals from the surface of the earth, and, like the hibernants, merely exist, no one ever seems to know how or where. Twenty-four hours after the last Forrardon fox is killed or abandoned there is not a Flogg-Walloper about the place; twenty-four hours before the first cub is rattled in the coverts Wallop Hall swarms with Flogg-Wallopers.

Wallop Hall is an enormous house, ferociously cold and draughty, and the Flogg-Wallopers are an enormous family, ferociously aggressive and full-blooded. They eat big — reference is now to the physiologically male members of the family — eat big, drink deep, curse round, ride hard, and speak conversationally — that is to say on any subject other than horses, hounds and hunting — never, or next to never. If a stranger is referred to in the presence of a Flogg-Walloper a Flogg-Walloper makes, be the stranger bishop or butcher, rajah or ratcatcher, but one inquiry: "Does he hunt?" Be the reply in the negative, not a word further is uttered by a Flogg-Walloper: for a Flogg-Walloper an individual who does not hunt, sultan or salesman, princess or peasant, does not live: the earth

is not inhabited by such a person; he is not on the earth; he is not a substance, he is a shadow. If a Flogg-Walloper, dying, were accosted by such a person in Paradise (supposing there to be stables in Paradise) a Flogg-Walloper would not recognise him as a fellow of his former earth; he would imagine that he was a permanent official of the place. Be the reply, on the other hand, "Yes," to "Does he hunt?" a Flogg-Walloper responds, not indeed with a word, but with an inimical grunt, "Hur!"; and the "Hur!" means "Does he! Let him show! Let him come out! I'll ride him down! I'll put him in his place — damn soon. Hur!"

A jolly family, the Flogg-Wallopers — if you hunt. If you do not hunt, if you attend a meeting of the Forrardon merely on foot, or if you are on social terms with a physiologically female Flogg-Walloper, and, calling at the Hall, view the Flogg-Wallopers swarming in, so to speak, their earth, an embarrassment connected with the physiologically males is that no one (not hunting) ever seems to have any idea of the relationship they bear to the head of the pack, who is Sir Cropp, or for that matter to one another. "A brother, I *think*," "a cousin, I *believe*," "the one that used to be at Harrow, I *fancy*," is the best scent you can expect to be cast to; but on the other hand their Christian names are easy. Every physiologically male Flogg-Walloper when brought to christening is named with the name of a leading hunt — Quorn Flogg-Walloper, Belvoir Flogg-Walloper, Beaufort, Rufford, Bicester, Heythrop Flogg-Walloper: you have only, when in Flogg-Walloper company, to call out the name of a famous hunt and a Flogg-Walloper will for certain look up, fierce and sharp, ferocious at having his attention drawn from his horse, his food, or his glass, with one of which attractions, he is, being a Flogg-Walloper, morally certain to be engaged.

Finally, they have, with two exceptions, no individually

distinctive personalities. They are merely Flogg-Wallopers; and when you are told that a man is a Flogg-Walloper you have been told everything; there remains nothing to be said about him. The exceptions, the two Flogg-Wallopers of outstanding personality, are Rufford and Bicester. Rufford, in the opinion of Miss Margin, the lady-housekeeper of the Hall, to whom, a woman of notable perspicacity, alone is due the public recognition of these distinguished and distinguishing qualities, is "the *religious* one" of the family; Bicester, she says, "the *literary* one" of the family; and she points out to you Bicester as the literary one because "he reads much more than the others"; and it is the fact that nearly every week he reads the hunting notices in the *Field;* and Rufford as the religious one "because he does not swear like the others"; and it is the fact that Rufford, when writhing out of his hunting boots (an operation during which a Flogg-Walloper descends into pits and abysses of blasphemy never plumbed by the most fluent skipper who has had his ship fouled or navvy who has hit his foot instead of a stone) has for his own particular and private commination as he struggles out (each Flogg-Walloper has his own) no more than a girlish "Blister and blast the muddy boot! Hell's consternations and calamities permeate and perish this blistered boot!"

A Flogg-Walloper hunting boot, it may in Flogg-Walloper defence here be said, fits the leg, from toe to tops, as a tight kid glove fits the hand; and, because of an abominable outrage inflicted on Sir Cropp as a result of injury to a servant who on one occasion was removing his boots for him, a special contrivance has been erected in the lobby of Wallop Hall, to the end that Flogg-Wallopers shall be, somehow, got out of their boots without manual assistance. To observe them getting out of their boots at this machine is, probably, one of the most impressive spectacles to be witnessed in any hunt during an entire season. It is a range

of bootjacks of enormous strength and solidity bolted into the floor and surmounted by a horizontal steel-cored pole bolted into the wall; and here, after a meet, may be seen three or four brace or so of Flogg-Wallopers, shoulder to shoulder, straining, heaving, hoisting, balancing, twisting, turning, beading with perspiration at the brow and steaming with profanity at the mouth, as they endeavour to extract Flogg-Walloper legs, thick and unyielding as gateposts, from the boots, creaseless and unyielding as steel gauntlets, into which, with but little less cursing and contortion they, earlier in the day, have crammed them.

Paddock—"That Paddock"—whose dismissal with great physical violence from the service of Sir Cropp has been noted, was the cause of the erection of this mighty engine of boot-removal and the instigator of the abominable outrage on Sir Cropp to which reference has been made. Engaged in removal of Sir Cropp's boots in the approved manner—that is to say, with back towards his master, the heel of Sir Cropp's left boot between his hands and the sole of Sir Cropp's right boot exerting the whole of Sir Cropp's pressure against his stern—thus engaged, on an evening when the boots had been more than usually soaking wet, and Sir Cropp's temper more than unusually raging high, the boot suddenly had come away as result of almost superhuman convulsion of the foot behind his stern, and he had been shot, like a ball from a cannon, seventeen feet (measured, and plan and diagrams produced in court in the subsequent proceedings) across the room, and head first through the panel of the door opposite, where he had remained, wedged between head and shoulders, until hacked out with saws and crowbars and carried away fainting to fall into the clutches (*vide* defending counsel in the proceedings aforesaid) of an employes' trade union, which made his claim for damages a test case, winning it ultimately in the House of Lords and inflicting thereby the abominable

outrage on Sir Cropp which resulted in Paddock settling down as a man of leisure and subsequently entering that daily service of Banjo Heritage to which he had looked forward ever since he was a little boy of ten, sir.

Banjo, arriving now, proceeded through the wide-open entrance door (never closed while a Flogg-Walloper hunt breakfast is on the table) and across the stone-flagged hall, passing the stupendous multiple bootjack therein, to where sounds as of a multitude at feast proclaimed the meal to be in process; and unannounced (no one is announced at or needs wait invitation to a Flogg-Walloper hunt breakfast) entered the immense dining room.

Here are the Flogg-Wallopers at breakfast. They call it breakfast because they always call this stupendous meal — the table crowded with heaped dishes of sausages, mutton chops, grilled chickens, cold rounds, pork pies, and other snacks — breakfast during the cubbing season, even in late October, when they are able to breakfast normally at nine; and there they are, eating apparently against time, and appearing exceedingly likely to win, with, wedged in among them, any one who has been out with hounds or who, as in Banjo's case, or in that of certain local ladies, has cared to drop in. The Flogg-Wallopers do not keep open house in the sense of always being glad to see you; but they keep it in the wider sense of presuming that every one who enters it must be a friend of some other member of the family and letting him eat what he will or drink what he will, so long as he does not interfere with their eating or drinking — a peril which no living soul who knows a Flogg-Walloper ever has dared even to contemplate.

The floor is carpeted principally with dogs; time-expired hounds, puppies at walk, terriers that go to ground and terriers which have refused to go to ground but have refused, equally, to leave the premises, all apparently asleep, but

each possessing in uncanny degree (born of experienced association with the violent movements of Flogg-Walloper boots) the faculty of leaping out of soundest sleep from the path of any who treads among them, as they leap now from that of Banjo, advancing to a vacant chair.

Sir Cropp is the Flogg-Walloper at the head of the table. He is engaged at this moment in emptying his hunting flask into his coffee, and he is, as you may observe, the heaviest, reddest, fiercest, as he is the hardest riding and hardest living, of all the red and heavy swarm. The chairs immediately to his right and left are unoccupied and are as likely to remain unoccupied as is the immediate vicinity of a tiger during a tiger's meal.

The Flogg-Walloper at the other end is Lady Flogg-Walloper, who is about to light one of the short, black, natural leaf cigar-ettes, which are the smoke she affects. She must be nearer seventy than sixty, but she looks as if made of a massive chunk of teak pickled in brine, and thus pickled, impervious to any ill or any weather and likely to last at least another sixty more. By daylight she is never seen but in a riding habit and she is reputed to sleep in one; her face is as blue as her husband's is red; her voice in the field as terrific as his; her moustache not far behind his own; her hands like two small legs of mutton; and her heart as kind as her appearance is alarming.

Banjo, back of the chair he has selected in hand, nods towards Sir Cropp, who acknowledges it by appearing to grow even redder than before, rather as if speech coming up had collided with food coming down and created an impasse; then to Lady Flogg-Walloper, who elevates one of her small legs of mutton into the air and brays "Ha!"; then drops into the chair and says to the young man beside him, "Hullo, Jim!"

"Hullo, Banjo, old horse," returns the young man genially. "Why the devil aren't you at Pelham's wedding?"

They both laugh and Jim Heritage pulls the whiskey decanter towards them.

"Been cubbing?" inquired Banjo. "No, not for me, old man. I have had mine. I oiled up before I started."

"Ah, you're one of those abstemious chaps," said Sir Jim, with no abstemious hand helping himself from the decanter. "No, I've not been cubbing, Banjo, I've been—" he glanced around in care of listening faces and dropped his voice—"I've been cocking."

Banjo turned from the pork pie at which he had been cutting. "Cocking? Oh, I get you, cock-fighting. Have you, though? You've got your birds?"

"Ss-sh! No one here matters much; but there's one or two old hens dropped in, Miss Trapper, and Miss Eider, and Mrs. Distaff over there, and old war-horse Flogg-Walloper herself, for that matter, you never know how she's going to take a thing; might think it shocking; and anyway, the fewer in the know the fewer to let the eggs drop, so to speak. Yes, I got the birds, Banjo, toppers, flyers, as we call 'em; six Brown-reds, four Blue-reds, two Brassy-wings and two Pyles. Course, that's just for a start. Bill an' me—he knows what we're talking about." He nodded across at a young man not unlike himself opposite who smiled back and winked. "Bill an' me are going in for this red-hot, now we're started. I'm going to have the finest team of birds in the country; there's more cocking goes on than you'd think, Banjo; and I'm going to have a real old cockpit built, and you'll have to sneak up and see the fun. I've arranged a first match already with a chap down in Devonshire, I knew him at Oxford, thousand guineas a side. I can see another picture going if I have the same luck at cocking I pull out at racing. Reminds me, Bill said a damn funny thing about my racing string yesterday. Bill!" He raised his voice so that the attention of the greater part of the table was caught. "Bill, what was that

you said yesterday about how I should summarise my assets if I have to come to sell up Piers and the Newmarket place, lock, stock and barrel?"

"Old Masters," cried the young man called Bill, flashing merry eyes along the eyes assembled towards him. "Old Masters, old crocks, old port and old brandy!"

A shout of laughter greets this epitome of the marketable effects of Sir James Heritage, Bt., and he and Bill, who is known as Bill Venture wherever Sir James is Jim Heritage, and as Mr. William Venture wherever Jim is Sir James, and who are long-legged, thin-flanked young men, riding about ten stone apiece (all in) of the type that would make you think of a horse even if you saw them in long petticoats (which at Piers Castle revels they sometimes wear) are drawn up into general conversation and very shortly into an almost general rising and scattering of the breakfast party; on account of which and to avoid which, takes place a leaping out of slumber for dear life of the carpet of dogs; and Banjo is left to his pork pie and to his neighbour on his other side, who is Medwyn Paradise, to Lady Flogg-Walloper, to Sir Cropp, who appears to be bursting but evidently, judging by his plate, knows better, to one or two other Flogg-Wallopers who have not so much as nodded in the chorus of leave-taking, being far too occupied in storing what is apparently their last meal for a week, to a brace of physiologically female Flogg-Wallopers, Mrs. Beaufort and Mrs. Quorn, and to the ladies Miss Eider, and Miss Trapper and Mrs. Distaff, euphemistically styled by Sir James the "one or two old hens who have dropped in."

"Heritage," says Medwyn Paradise to Banjo, opening conversation when silence falls, with the air of a man who has been waiting for silence in order that he may conspicuously fill it, "I hear that you are to have a new parson at Ashton Parva."

Medwyn Paradise hears everything. He is a middle-aged hunting (mild hunting) bachelor who is always, as now, in the company of ladies, and in any company is easily first in what is believed to be (but is not) the purely feminine attribute of gossiping. He has a trick when in conversation of looking at you from under his eyebrows in a manner so pronounced as to give somehow the impression that he is hiding away there up to some mystery or other and either is inviting you, by very bright glints of his eyes, upward or sidelong, to come in and have a look at it, or, if gossip in the matter in hand (which invariably it is) testing how you are likely to take some slightly malicious depth which he wishes to impart into it; and it is with one intention or the other that he glints thus now at Banjo with his inquiry relative to a new vicar at Parva.

"First I have heard of it," says Banjo. "Who is he?"

"Name is Quest," supplies Medwyn Paradise, squinting now along the line of Mrs. Distaff, Miss Trapper and Miss Eider, whose ears he knows by experience he will secure, and flashing a glint at Mrs. Quorn and Mrs. Beaufort whom also he would like to add to his pack. "Quest. He . . ."

"Does he hunt?" barks Sir Cropp, the first words he has uttered since he seated himself nearly an hour before.

Medwyn Paradise smiles. "I should say not." (Complete effacement from the topic of Sir Cropp.) "I would scarcely imagine a man who could afford to hunt coming to the Ashton Parva living."

"I couldn't for the life of me imagine a parson going there for any other reason," declares Mrs. Quorn Flogg-Walloper, whose life has run to this point about forty years and who has installed a permanent monocle in one eye and a permanent hunting-field scar over the other in the course of it.

"Yes, what on earth does he imagine he is going to do down there?" inquires Mrs. Distaff, who is a tall non-

hunting woman from Ashton Magna, with a long grey face between very long green earrings, and who herself does very little else than object to what other people do.

Medwyn Paradise appears about to supply this information but politely gives way to Miss Trapper whose contribution is, "If his name is Quest, I wonder now would he be one of the *Tracy* Quests, or perhaps one of the *Manville* Quests, the Northumberland branch?"

Miss Trapper is a little non-hunting maiden lady from Malford Regis who is wearing half-mourning (and has already said she ought not to be here) on account of the recent death of a distinguished Trapper, whom she had never met and who had not the faintest idea of her existence but whom she links to herself by tracing all Trappers of any eminence back to an original, primeval Trapper, and therefore going into half-mourning when they die and leaving the rest to the inference of the discerning. "Oh, not a close relation," she will honourably affirm, if commiserated with, "just a family connection, just a touch or two of black"; whereby, together with her gift, whenever she hears a new name mentioned, for producing other branches of the same name, she maintains a reputation for being in touch with all the landed families. "Or possibly the Devonshire Quests," she now adds. "They, I know, have a clerical thread among them."

"Point of his name seems to me," says Mrs. Beaufort Flogg-Walloper, who, in a brown polo jumper up to her chin and cropped hair flat on her head, gives the impression of a sulky, rather personable, stable apprentice who has just been refused a mount, "point of his name seems to me that if he is not coming here to quest foxes, what is he going to quest?"

"Souls," says Medwyn Paradise.

"Neat," rumbles Lady Flogg-Walloper in her deep bass. "Neat. PAH!"

Lady Flogg-Walloper's chair is tilted back on its hind legs, her vast back against its back. Her shins against the table's edge prop her position so that her knees and lap tower above the cloth as the base of a mountain overhanging a lake; the mountain, away above, where her head forms its summit, having the qualities of a volcano, for the reason that she is smoking one of her natural leaf cigarettes in the leisurely, bored, after-meal way she always affects, which is to say opening her great mouth to its widest extent, much as if yawning, and emitting therefrom an incredible volume of smoke, "PAH!"— the PAH! shooting it across the slopes of the mountain with the volcanic effect referred to.

Medwyn Paradise accepts her commendation with a glint along his line that equally might mean gratification at her "Neat!" or invitation to disparage her for her monstrous "PAH!" and starts now in earnest to entertain his audience.

"What he thinks he is going to do down there, as you were asking, Mrs. Distaff," he begins, "is, as a matter of fact, mighty big things. He is going to turn Ashton Parva upside down and inside out. He——"

"Oh, *that* kind of parson," exclaims Mrs. Distaff, finishing a cigarette and screwing it down upon her plate rather as if it were the kind of parson referred to and she was rubbing his nose in what she disapproved of in him. "You know, I don't think I quite approve of that type of parson who comes *driving* people into church."

Medwyn Paradise glints, well pleased. "Well, they will want some driving, I imagine, at Parva. What about you, Heritage, for one? Point is that nobody ever goes to the church at Ashton Parva except, I believe, Miss Pasture, who plays the organ there——"

"Well, I wish him joy of Miss Pasture!" declares Mrs. Distaff, and there is a laugh to which all the direct listeners

contribute except Banjo, who is sitting curiously silent, and Miss Eider, who never laughs at anybody because she always has a good word for everybody, marred slightly, however, by a trick she has of throwing into her sentences a devastating "But" which, with its corollaries, has the effect of bursting like a Mills bomb in destruction of all that has gone before.

"Miss Pasture," now speaks up Miss Eider, who is a non-hunting middle-aged spinster of Great Gallop with the appearance — lemon-haired, guinea-faced, yellow-dressed — of having been powdered from head to foot in ochre — "is a thoroughly good, kind-hearted, self-sacrificing woman, and the way she has devoted her life to her mother is, I think, noble and touching in the extreme. *But* her bitterness against that absconded brother of hers is truly terrible in its vindictiveness, whatever he may have done, and if he ever does come back I am sorry for him."

"PAH!" erupts the volcano.

All eyes turn to the cloud, anticipating a possible rumble. No rumble comes.

"I am inclined," says Banjo, taking the silence and expressing by his tone the thoughtfulness that has settled on his face, "to feel a bit sorry for this Quest. Does he know what he is coming to, Paradise?"

Medwyn Paradise turns. "He does."

"You seem to know a lot about him."

Medwyn Paradise glints his line. "I know everything about him."

The glint and the something suggestive terseness of the statement are invitation to be probed for something worth probing, and Mrs. Distaff probes.

"I declare, Mr. Paradise, you know everything about everybody. Now do tell us, please."

"He is Bratton's find."

"That dear Admiral!" cried Miss Trapper. "You know, he is, as I said when he came here, one of the *Cooper* Brattons. Now the Cooper Brattons are the *Devonshire* branch so that if he found this Mr. Quest, you may depend that — Does he come from Devonshire, do you know?"

"I don't know that," says Medwyn Paradise. "He comes, directly, from this part of the world, from Shadpool, a curate there; and how he comes here is this. Bratton, you know, good little chap, ever since he came into the Manor House at Parva a year ago, has been crazy to be the Lord Bountiful, fairy godfather sort of thing of the place, and to make everybody rosy and smiling and happy as himself. Main thing he has had his eye on is a dear little church with a dear little vicar looking after the dear little villagers and with a dear little service to which he can trot every Sunday and where he will read the lessons; and of course what he found when he got there was an absolutely derelict old church, derelict so far as service or congregation are concerned; it is a fine enough old church, of course, without a vicar at all — old Pewish, you remember, had just died — with no prospect of ever getting one, at the poverty-line income it offers, and with Pewish I don't suppose ever having had a soul in it for years, bar, presumably, Miss Pasture, and, no doubt, you, Heritage."

He turns his glint to Banjo and Miss Eider take the opportunity to dash in a good word for the late Mr. Pewish.

"Poor old Mr. Pewish," dashes in Miss Eider, "was a thoroughly good, earnest, devout man, who gave literally his whole life to the place because he went there, I have heard, when he was thirty, and eighty-four his age when he died, and I believe never took a holiday, couldn't afford to, of course, in all that time; *but* he grew so feeble and remiss the last twenty years of his time or more that really it

was a disgrace to the Church having him there; and for all the good he did, stubbornly refusing to resign, he might never have been there at all. The parish——"

"PAH!" erupts the volcano, as effectively shooting the devout but remiss Pewish off the table as death had removed him from the earth, and Medwyn Paradise continues.

"So good little Bratton, immediately he arrived and ever since he has been there, has been fussing round in his good little way to find some one. The living, of course, is one of the Piers' livings, in the gift of Jim Heritage, so was as good as in the little Admiral's pocket to do what he liked with; and from what he told me, one time and another, he hawked it all round the diocese and pretty soon found he couldn't do much. The income is miserable, under £250 a year, I believe, and the vicarage reeking with damp and only fit to be pulled down; and top of all that, as any one can see for himself, is just the kind of living, even if the income was a plum, with no intellectual society (sorry, Heritage!) and no opportunities, where a man, once he gets in, would find himself buried alive, left and forgotten, just as old Pewish was."

Banjo spoke. "Precisely why I said I feel sorry for this Quest you say has taken it. What on earth sort of a man is he, Paradise?"

"Why, he is a live wire. Good little Bratton had just finally hooked him when I was dining with him night before last, and he was beside himself with delight. The man has been a curate some years at Shadpool, and you know what a roughhouse Shadpool is, purely industrial, yet has made quite a name for himself there."

"Young?"

"Thirty something, married, two kids. Bratton had him staying a night sometime ago and I saw him in the distance, not knowing who he was, of course, and shouldn't have

guessed him for a parson, anyway. Striding along by Bratton who was on a horse — because he couldn't keep up with him walking, I imagine — wearing an old tweed coat, quite the ——"

"Oh, *that* sort of parson," interpolated Mrs. Distaff, screwing the nose of this new sort into her plate just as she had screwed the other. "You know, I don't think I approve of these mufti parsons, you know. You know, I think that a parson ought to ——"

"He sounds to me," pronounced Miss Trapper impressively, "a *Tracy* Quest, not a Devonshire Quest. The Tracy Quests ——"

"He doesn't sound to me," pronounced Mrs. Quorn, "as if he is looking for the burial you say is in store for him. How did good little Bratton ——"

Medwyn Paradise's eyebrow caves appear to deepen, a sure sign of confidences. "He isn't looking for burial." He glints promise along his line. "He is coming to Parva because he is looking for advancement, preferment, as they call it."

Mrs. Distaff, poising her screwed cigarette butt to screw its nose off again for daring to seek preferment, asks first, incredulously, "In Ashton Parva?"

"In Ashton Parva," affirmed Medwyn Paradise, glinting delightedly. "Not only preferment, but preferment to a named place, Fontwych, directly it falls vacant, which it is likely to in a couple of years or less, the chap there at present to go to a new Colonial bishopric, Bratton says. Fontwych, you know, is regarded as a plum. Every one who gets Fontwych, which is fat enough itself, walks from there to something *very* fat; in Church circles they call it the Bishop's pet lamb I believe; and good little Bratton has some sort of pull with the Bishop, through his late wife's family, I fancy, and as good as got him to promise that if he persuaded this chap Quest to come to Ashton Parva

just to pull the place together, he should be earmarked for Fontwych, or for something as good;" and Medwyn Paradise, his reputation for knowing everything again established, sat back and rewarded himself with a cigarette. "That is how Bratton got this live-wire Quest man."

"And how?" inquired Mrs. Distaff, rapidly puffing up another nose ready for grating, "does this live-wire Quest man—married, two children, you said—suppose he is going to live at Ashton Parva meanwhile?"

Medwyn Paradise blew out his match and revealed by his glints further stores of information. "Good little Bratton again! Bratton is adding something out of his own pocket, professing the right to do so in his capacity as church warden and practically patron of the living, because it appears that this Quest, though he couldn't afford to come on the income as it was, jibbed badly at accepting, so to speak, charity."

Mrs. Distaff, though the nose was scarcely yet short enough for it, conveyed her cigarette firmly to her plate and screwed it vigorously in. "Oh, *that* sort of spirit! You know I don't think I approve of the kind of parson who shows that sort of spirit towards a——"

"PAH!" erupts the volcano. "PAH!"

The second PAH!, niggard of smoke, is a kind of final clearance of eruptive matter. Down to earth come the legs of Lady Flogg-Walloper's chair, missing by a hair's breadth a time-expired hound camped beneath it, which leaps for its life with a startled yelp; out at it shoots a massive foot of Lady Flogg-Walloper, equally startled; up from earth and out of danger leaps all that postion of the carpet of dogs in her vicinity, also startled. Lady Flogg-Walloper rises. Every one rises.

"Going?" says Medwyn Paradise to Banjo. "Well, not so sorry for the Reverend Quest now?"

"I would say he is taking a risk," said Banjo.

CHAPTER V

MR. CUSTOM RECEIVES SOME CONFIDENCES

If ears burn when one is being spoken of, that young clergyman who, espied by Lady Vestibule mounting the steps of St. George's, Hanover Square, was declared by her to have a very striking looking face, recalled by her as formerly "one of Father Absolute's young men", and wondered of her as to what connection he could have with the wedding, should have had fiery ears, as, on conclusion of the ceremony, he left the church.

He had not. If any of the features of the Reverend David Quest, senior curate of St. Mark's, Shadpool, in the see of Westonbury, vicar-elect of the parish of Ashton Parva in the same diocese, could have been described as fiery, it would have been his eyes, and fiery would have been too harsh a word — noticeably bright, rather; keen; eager; ardent; and especially eager now, as he stood for a moment hung up in the crowd that blocked the way in its dispersal after watching the passage to their car of the bride and bridegroom.

He was visioning his future.

His movement, when he was able to move, was sudden and not as he had premeditated — quickly down a step and with a hand laid out to the shoulder of a man who stood, back to him, yet another step below. As sharply he held his hand; he had made a mistake.

But the shoulder had been touched and the man, who was Mr. Custom, turned.

"I am ever so sorry," Quest smiled, "I thought you were

a friend of mine." And the name of his friend had been, in his impulse, so near to the tip of his tongue, that he added it. "Admiral Bratton."

Mr. Custom was attracted by the taking appearance of this young clergyman. "Why, as to that," he returned pleasantly, "all wedding guests are friends, in a manner of speaking, I suppose."

David Quest, elevated in spirits, had pleasure in some one to speak with. He smiled again. "Yes, linked by the bride or the bridegroom."

Mr. Custom used the word he had used in a thousand legal conferences, "Precisely."

They moved down the steps together and his corollary had no legal sound. "A lovely link, those whom the bride joins," he added chattily. "An exquisite bride, did you not think?"

"I thought her—" Quest declared and paused for a word sufficient for his thought. "I thought her quite extraordinarily beautiful—extraordinarily."

They were on the pavement now, and now, David Quest's intention being to cross the road, it was the traffic that held up progress. He looked at Mr. Custom with something of a shy air as though doubtful whether he should confide to a stranger what his elevated spirits caused him to long to proclaim to some one, and then proclaimed it.

"And I was especially interested in her," he said, "—in both of them."

"You were?" inquired Mr. Custom, interested.

"I was." David Quest flushed. He was very excited at what he now was impelled to say. He was about to speak as a vicar is entitled to speak, and it was excitingly novel to him to speak as a vicar. He was embarrassed at the note of pride he knew he would be unable to keep out of his voice, and he was apprehensive lest the note should be worse than proud, pompous. But he must out with it! He repeated, to

steady himself, "I was." Then he tried to glance unconcernedly across the road and to speak unconcernedly. "They are parishioners of mine," he said.

A way had cleared in the traffic and Mr. Custom was about to step off the pavement. But he drew back the foot he had advanced and stared upon Quest, much surprised.

"Parishioners, of yours? You tell me that?"

David Quest experienced a horribly caught-out feeling. This stranger's profound astonishment at what he had said could only be because he did not look like a vicar; and this time he flushed deeply with his self-conscious laugh as he spoke. "Well, are going to be parishioners of mine, I ought to have said," he laughed.

"Dear me," said Mr. Custom, "this is very interesting, very curious. I think we ought to cross. We are stopping people. Which way are you going?"

David Quest was going to Paddington, it appeared. "I believe I can walk there along the park, if I can find the park. I was three years in the East End one time, but I don't know this side of London very well. Why curious, sir?"

"I can put you right," Mr. Custom informed him. "Straight as you can go across Bond Street here—" he pointed with his umbrella—"will bring you to the park, then turn out at Lancaster Gate. It happens that I have a professional call to make in Lancaster Gate; shall we keep along together? Curious to hear that they are to be parishioners of yours, because——"

They were proceeding along together as he talked; but now crowded pavements, and then the thronged crossing of Bond Street, kept separating them. It was not until they were fairly in the straight of Brook Street for the park that Mr. Custom was able to fill his broken statement.

"Curious," he then said, "curious, and very interesting, because I believe I should know your name. I have been

trying to recall it as we dodged along back there. A 'Q' begins it, I feel sure."

David Quest, as interested, and as curious as the other, as they had dodged along, gave smiling assent. "It does. Q for Quest — David Quest. But how — "

"Because it happens — most curiously in such a chance meeting as ours — that I am solicitor to the patron of the living you are taking."

"Admiral Bratton?" David Quest exclaimed.

"No, no; Sir James Heritage."

"Of course, of course. But it was Admiral Bratton, you see ——"

"I know, I know all about it. Admiral Bratton has written to me on the matter, and papers relating to the living, of course, came through my hands. That was how I knew your name. What surprised me ——"

All through their disunited progress through the traffic Mr. Custom had been taking curious glances at his companion; and it was with a curious, something sidelong glance that he broke his sentence now.

"Yes," David Quest inquired. "What is it that surprised you?"

"Why, I had expected somehow," said Mr. Custom, "a much older man."

Quest laughed. "You know, I thought when I first used to you, back on the steps there, the expression 'parishioners of mine' that you looked at me as if at my age I had no right to have parishioners. You made me feel about eighteen."

Mr. Custom, of punctilious habit of mind, was concerned. "Not at all, not at all, I assure you. I am sorry for that."

Quest laughed again. "Oh, a mere joke. I am older than I look, anyway. Ashton Parva is not getting an experienced vicar. It is my first living, you know. That is what — excuse the word — what I am so bucked about. But it is

getting a well experienced priest. I have been thirteen, close on fourteen, years in the Church."

"I am sure, I am sure," Mr. Custom accepted punctiliously. "It was the wrong expression I used when I said I had imagined an older man——"

"'Much older'," corrected David Quest mischievously. He was in the mood to enjoy everything, and enjoyed this.

"Did I say much older? Yes, well, in a way, that is it. It was an altogether different type of man I had imagined."

"Ah, my type," laughed Quest. "I am afraid I cannot plead anything but what appears there. What type did you imagine? And why?"

Mr. Custom walked quite some little distance before replying. "Why, Mr. Quest," he then said, looking something narrowly into the other's face, "I do not say you look too youthful, you do not; but you look — you give me very strongly the impression of — of force, of keenness, of ambition. I would call you a man with — with a future before you. Shall I say, rather, with the vision of a future before you?"

David Quest, who had been in light mood till this, went now to sober mood.

"It is not an ill thing to have said about one," he said soberly.

"It is a very commendatory thing," affirmed Mr. Custom, "and it is so intended."

David Quest said quite simply. "Thank you." The vision of a future was very much before him. It was anticipation of that future, of his foot now, with his first vicariate, upon the straight road towards it, that had put that eager look into his face as he stood on the steps of St. George's, that happy note into his tone in his first exchanges with Mr. Custom. It was anticipation of that future, of his resolution to create it, of the great things in his calling he would do in it, that gave now that sober aspect to his mien. "A

great name in the Church!" That had been the slogan, ever in his mind, at the outset of his reception into Holy Orders. "A great name in the Church." He could see himself saying it with shining face on the first day that started all the infinitely happy days of his married life, could hear Roddy's glad endorsement of it, her sweet amendment of it — "A great name *for* the Church, David." A great name — the long, hard-working, much achieving, but opportuneless years in the curacy at Shadpool had something lessened the iteration of the slogan, dulled its ring . . . Now! Now the chance, the opening, the opportunity at last was come!

Occupied with his thoughts he had paced on with Mr. Custom in silence quite some distance since his "Thank you." He said now, those thoughts coming back to the statement that had put them in train; "And why was it not a man of the type you — you kindly credit me with being, that you expected to be coming to Ashton Parva?"

Mr. Custom did not reply at once. He had been a little regretting his remark since he had made it. They now were at Grosvenor Square and he made the attempt to lose his reply in the Square's impressive aspect. "This is Grosvenor Square," he observed. "You do not know this part of London, I think you said. Some very fine residences here."

"Very. Yes. I was asking you ——"

The reply had to be made. Mr. Custom phrased it and spoke it with as much inconsequence as he could give it. "It is rather a remote little place, Ashton Parva," he said.

He had intended to look away, adding to his inconsequence of tone, as he spoke; but the direction of his look was across David Quest instead of away from him, and he caught the quick contraction of the brows that informed him, too well, that his inconsequence had failed.

To his relief, the disturbed expression was gone as soon as it came. It was a very eager face that David Quest turned

to him. It was a very eager and strongly confident voice that spoke.

"Ah, I see what you mean. I know exactly the thing in your mind. But you are very mistaken, entirely mistaken. You are thinking that Ashton Parva is not the kind of place that a young man, a man ambitious of opportunity in the Church, would go to. You are thinking a man might be buried there, I daresay; I think it very likely — in the ordinary way. But in our case — I mean my wife and I, you know — it does not apply. Not in the least. Quite the reverse."

His animation in assertion that it did not apply was very marked, jerky in its vehemence.

"Of course, I saw all that myself. We saw all that ourselves. In the ordinary way, such a step was the last we would have taken. Shadpool was proving itself pretty barren of opportunity, but Shadpool was much better than that. It was Admiral Bratton who turned the thing into what it is — a golden chance, a heaven-sent opportunity. Admiral Bratton has been quite wonderful. I cannot tell you how wonderful he has been. He has been kindness itself. He had me up to town yesterday to spend the night with him finally to discuss one or two points. He ——"

Mr. Custom nodded. "Oh, I know Admiral Bratton's reputation for goodness of heart."

"Everybody does. That man shines like a good deed in a naughty world. He *is* a good deed. I am making him my living example of what is my especial gospel ——"

The vicar-elect of Ashton Parva looked upwards to the sky with a lift of chin and a shine in eyes, as though offering there this especial gospel of which he spoke, and Mr. Custom made to put a question; but David Quest was away again where he had left off.

"As I was saying, Admiral Bratton made out the apparently impossible — Ashton Parva as you take it to be

for a man whose work is yet to be done — the more than abundantly possible. The church life of the parish has fallen hopelessly into decay for years past, is dead, as you know probably better than I, though I saw for myself when I went down there——"

"Ah, you have been there?" Mr. Custom interpolated.

"Yes, yes, more than once. Stayed with the Admiral. Took Sunday Service in the church. It was distressing, lamentable. Apart from the Admiral and the lady who plays the organ——"

Mr. Custom had a twitch of his lips: "Miss Pasture."

"That was the name, yes. Apart from those, no worshipper at all of the residential people, and of the villagers precisely seven. Imagine it! A beautiful old church like that; good farms, good houses round about — and a congregation at Sunday-morning service of nine all told! Look at the opportunity, the crying need, there alone!"

Mr. Custom looked up. "There *alone?* Why alone? You speak as if——"

David Quest, who was considerably the taller, beamed down upon him. He carried a crook-handled umbrella and he circled it in his hand as he spoke. "As if more than Ashton Parva were in prospect? More is!"

He caused the umbrella to whirl. "You don't mind hearing all this?"

"I am profoundly interested."

The umbrella almost whistled. "It is jolly to talk of it, particularly to some one associated with the place. More is in prospect — much more." He checked the whirling of his umbrella and held it out as if in demonstration. "Here is Ashton Parva, as I have described it to you, as you know it for yourself. Here is Admiral Bratton, just come into the place, crazy to make it a kind of model rural parish centring on its church. Here is the Bishop, for years worried, grieved, about the neglect into which the parish has fallen, but unable

to do anything with the previous incumbent — long past work, poor fellow, refusing to go — you know the kind of thing; and then, when the old man at last dies, unable to fill the living on account of its poorness, its general glaring drawbacks. Here he is, sir, the Bishop, desperately concerned to get some one into the living to pull the place together; and then here comes to him Admiral Bratton, who has some connection with him through his wife's family, and says to him — this is how it went, sir; says to him: 'Bishop, I have got the very man to pull Ashton Parva together, young, keen, capable. Cannot take the living because he cannot afford to, but I am making that all right. I am adding the little more and how much it is ——' "

"Ah, really? Splendid!" breaks in Mr. Custom.

"Yes, splendid indeed; and so tactfully, so sweetly done; I could tell you a lot about that. 'But still dare not take the living,' he goes on to the Bishop, 'because, naturally, afraid of being buried there for life.'

"Sir," broke off David Quest, gaily circling his umbrella again, and looking down triumphantly upon Mr. Custom. "What can you imagine the Bishop replying to that?"

"Why, I can imagine him," returned Mr. Custom, smiling up, "And of course I see all your story now, and I congratulate you, and I congratulate Ashton Parva, and Admiral Bratton and the Bishop upon it — I can imagine the Bishop saying, 'Let this young man come down and pull the parish together and you can assure him from me, Admiral, that his reward shall be that he shall *not* be left to be buried alive there — much the contrary.' "

"The very words!" cried David Quest, swinging the umbrella faster than before. "Almost the Admiral's very words to me! Do you know Fontwych, sir?"

"Oh, I have heard of Fontwych, of course. Fontwych notoriously is a living whence ——"

David Quest swung the umbrella so that Mr. Custom

had the slightly nervous fear that it might fly out of his hand. "Fontwych was mentioned!" he declared, his eyes brilliant. "Actually mentioned by name!"

Mr. Custom stopped and removed his glove from his right hand. "Famous!" he smiled. "Famous! I turn out of the park here. You go along a very little way farther and you will come to the Lancaster Gate exit. Paddington is easy from there." He extended his hand and took David Quest's and held it. "I count our chance meeting a happy one. I have been most interested. I congratulate you, Mr. Quest, and, as I have said, Ashton Parva, and all concerned, most heartily, most heartily. When do you — er — take over — go down?"

"Six weeks to-day."

Mr. Custom's hand was being gripped so cordially that he was a little relieved to withdraw it. "When next I am at Piers it will be a very great pleasure to call on you and see you — pulling the place together!"

David Quest laughed in great happiness. "See me a full-blown vicar in my own vicarage! We will look out for you most keenly, sir, my wife and I."

They parted. Mr. Custom went a step, then turned and called Quest back. "There is one thing — I had meant to ask it, I would like to know it. You spoke a little back of having an especial gospel of your own; that was the term I think you used. Might I —— ?"

David Quest looked at him closely. No umbrella swinging was in action or in his aspect now. The colour on his cheek bones deepened. "Are you interested in these things?" he asked.

"Profoundly," said Mr. Custom. "Profoundly. I am far, very far from calling myself a religious man; but certainly I am — what shall I say? — an interested man. I think the laity in general are more interested in knowing

what precisely the Church has to offer them than the clergy suspect."

Yet a shade more the colour deepened on the other's cheeks.

"I am a little diffident about speaking about these things," he said slowly, "when, how shall I put it, out of harness, so to speak. Of course I ought not to be diffident, a priest never should be out of harness; yet the fact, the failing, remains. I will tell you very gladly what it is that I have called my gospel; very gladly, but I know, out of harness, not in a surplice, speaking as one of two chance acquaintances, very badly. My gospel, the gospel that I long for opportunity to spread widely as it can go, is, simply that the sins of the flesh, evil as they are, abominable as they can be, are as nothing compared with the sins of the spirit, with meanness, with selfishness, with bitterness, in a word, in the Prayer Book's word, with envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness."

He paused. Mr. Custom's slowly nodding head was giving slow assent.

"What has struck me," David Quest took up again, "is that the evils of the sins of the spirit are, almost solely, the teaching of the Gospels; yet, to the mind at all events of the average man, it is the sins of the flesh to which religion has seemed too much to devote itself ever since. The world to-day doesn't want that. It wants the Gospels. Do I interest you?"

"Profoundly," said Mr. Custom. "Profoundly."

"I have given you exactly an illustration of what I mean," David Quest said, "when I told you as we came along that Admiral Bratton was a living example of the message I want to preach. That man, he would not in the least mind hearing me say it, is far from being what is commonly accepted as meant by a religious man. His

passion is hunting; he has a swear in half his sentences when he talks; likes his glass and his table mighty well; for ever, when he starts telling me of his experiences, is breaking off with a jovial laugh and with, 'Gad, I'm afraid that's a yarn I can't tell you' — and has a heart of purest gold; has never had, and never could have, a bad word to say of anybody, a hard or a mean thought in his mind. That man, Mr. Custom, has weaknesses of the flesh — abundantly; sins of the spirit — not a jot of one. For that man, and all his sort, and all with sins of the flesh far worse than his, but with spirit as charitable, Heaven's gates, in my view, are wide. For the man with no single solitary failing of the flesh, straitly and strictly religious in the accepted sense, but with mean thoughts, bitterness, selfishness ——" He made a gesture with his hand. "Not so; the gates are shut. The camel and the needle's eye — the rich man and the Kingdom of Heaven."

He stopped. If he had felt diffident in opening "out of harness" his gospel, he clearly had shed any such embarrassment as he revealed it. He had intended to speak, and he had begun, quietly, almost casually. He had stepped, within five sentences, into an intensity, quiet-voiced but steel of purpose, vibrant with feeling, that showed him to Mr. Custom as manifestly a man with a gospel expounding his gospel.

"Go on," said Mr. Custom.

David Quest smiled, relaxed the tension of body and of face into which he had been carried. "There is no more," he said. "That is all there is to it, but, as I think, how much! Mr. Custom, I believe with every fibre of me that that is the gospel the world stands in need of to-day, desperately in need, bread not stones, release from chains not of the flesh, but of the spirit. Sins of the flesh carry their own punishment, through the flesh; are curable by resolution, by physicians. Sins of the spirit carry no visible toll. They

poison with bitterness the soul that has them but he does not know that he is poisoned. He is unhappy, but he does not know why he is unhappy; discontented and thinks he knows why he is discontented but does not know why. That is the opportunity I seek — to tell him why."

Mr. Custom was thinking. "You will not find your views always acceptable," he said. "It is a pretty strong citadel, the citadel of the sins of the spirit."

David Quest's face lit up anew. "Ah, 'citadel'," he exclaimed. "That is the word for it! That is the very word that touches my great quotation, the lines that inspire me when I see myself, in my opportunity, carrying forward my message against materialism. Do you know this, sir, Matthew Arnold's:

> 'Charge once more and be dumb,
> Let the victors when they come,
> When the forts of folly fall
> Find thy body 'neath the wall!'

Fine, eh? !"

"Fine," Mr. Custom agreed, but a little absently. He still was thinking. He was seeing for this young man, Piers Castle and its kind, Wallop Hall and its kind — the flesh, full-licensed. He was seeing for him Pelham Heritages, Pastures, Distaffs, Paradises and their kind — the spirit, encitadeled.

"Fine," he said again. "And your gospel, more than fine." He put out his hand in approval and in final leave-taking.

"You will find your opportunity even in Ashton Parva," he said. He pressed the hand he held. "I would say just one thing to you, a little subversive of your quotation perhaps, but I think wise — go warily."

CHAPTER VI

DAVID QUEST TAKES STOCK

DAVID QUEST, going down in the train from Paddington to Shadpool, went down very much in the umbrella-swinging mood. Roddy would be waiting at the station for him — and he brought her news of the fixed, settled date of the great adventure to Ashton Parva; Philippa and Jumbo, the two little girls, would come wildly rushing to the doors of their rooms — and a little present for each of them was in his suitcase to make them wilder yet. Fine! Fine! He was not able, here in the railway carriage, to swing his umbrella in expression of how fine everything was; but he had but one other fellow passenger in the compartment with him — a haggard-looking man, much older than himself, who throughout the journey, seated at the other end, stared solidly from the window and who, for all the notice he took, might not have been there at all — and he was able to drum the umbrella, held between his knees, on the floor; to stretch out his legs and drum sometimes, instead, with his heels; to lie right back and with shining eyes fixed on the roof see pictures there that made them shine the more; to comport himself, in fact, very much as a schoolboy holiday bound; as a sailor homeward from his ship after long commission. Fine! Fine!

Yes, Phil and Jumbo, coming wildly in greeting to the door of the half-house they had furnished and occupied in Shadpool, never yet a real home of their own! Phil would be nine next birthday, Jumbo seven. Eight mortal years

and six mortal years they had lived, those poor kids, in what was little better than apartments (and he and Roddy over ten!) with scarcely a holiday away; first at Frodsham, that small industrial town where his first curacy after leaving Father Absolute had been; then at Shadpool, that very much greater industrial town whither now he was bound — and whence, in brief six weeks, he would be bound away!

Frodsham! Shadpool! Small opportunity there for delivering that release from the chains of the sins of the spirit, that call for realisation that the spirit only mattered, not the flesh, which was so strong within him! Poverty, overcrowding, hand-to-mouth existence, stark misery, there, and, much more, in Father Absolute's East End slums, not only had needed other ministry, but actually had caused the revelation to him that not the failings of the flesh but the evils of the spirit were at root of life's emptiness to-day. Those industrial working classes, beset by every evil of the flesh, had, as their birthright seemingly, as their compensation from a sympathetic heaven for their plight, goodness of heart among themselves that at once gave him his views and made them living examples of his views. Among them he had but their weaknesses of the flesh to help them fight; and that, given their kindly spirits, was but a fight against an open enemy, visible darkness; a thing easy to point out and possible to wash away as dirt can be espied and tackled; a battle inspired by the knowledge that heaven would judge these things — the fellow-helpful natures, the sorely tempted flesh — much differently from the judgment that the world pronounces on them. Out here, away along the opportunities that Ashton Parva would lead to, was where the fight would be — the hidden enemy, the forces of mean spirits that held in chains the souls they occupied; was where the call was sounding for such as

himself, eager, should need be, to leave their bodies 'neath the wall!

The call! His mind, prospecting into the future, looked back along the past, right back to where a boy, the call to fight beneath these banners whose uniform he wore, had come to him.

He had been a pupil at Filchester Grammar School, a day boy, his father a Filchester doctor. Doctor Quest died when David, the only child, was ten. His mother, a clergyman's daughter, left by her husband's death with smallest means, had the strong wish that David, when old enough, might choose the Church for his career; she had also the resolve that the choice, if he made it, should be his own — a " Call " to the Church, in no degree a mere obedience to a mother's wish: and she never expressed to him the wish; expressing it, fervently, solely in prayer.

Filchester Grammar School — " Filchester Grammar " as it is known in public-school circles — of public-school rank, and high in it, has two very noted institutions, one notable within the school and at Cambridge only, the other of far wider note. The first is the Bateson Scholarship, open only to boys proposing to take Holy Orders and providing for the whole university and training college career of the winner; the second is a settlement in the East End of London — the Filchester Mission — incorporated in the parish church of its district and administered by the vicar of that church. Filchester is a Cathedral city and once every year, the grammar boys attending, a settlement Sunday sermon is preached in the Cathedral by the settlement's head.

David's sixteenth birthday happened to fall on a settlement Sunday. Grammar day boys are permitted to attend Cathedral services with their parents. David sat with his mother. He had maintained, since his first church-going

as a small child, his habit of stealing his hand, unobserved, into his mother's, while the sermon was being delivered; and his accustomed hand went there now as the preacher began his address.

Father Absolute, of the settlement and of its parish church, was the preacher. He would have been near to fifty years of age at that time; and he presented himself as he stood, after his Invocation, gazing silently a few moments across the wide spaces of the Cathedral, a tall, powerful, markedly ascetic-looking man of a face as if touched with divine fire, of (when he spoke) a voice and an inspiration similarly touched. He addressed himself particularly, as was the custom, to the boys. He spoke of the settlement's need for older boys in the holidays, and for "Old Boys" in spare time, to come down and take part in recreation with the settlement lads. He spoke, very earnestly, very compellingly, of the Church's need of ensigns to carry on her banners. "All you public schools," he said, "have an Army class. I would to God all might have a Church class. I would promise every fellow there more fighting; more gallant hardship; more need for desperate courage; more call for sacrifice to save another; more glorious, infinitely more glorious victories; more noble, infinitely more noble death — going down fighting to help fill up the moat that those behind may tread upon the bodies as they bring the Cross shining on, with sword of light in his hand — than ever he would win with sword of steel. Let him come to me! I will tell him!"

It was as Father Absolute cried those words, trumpet notes through those spaces, that David's mother felt David's fingers twitch, then squeeze her fingers very hard.

She looked at him.

To present quite bluntly the aspect of his face, he was breathing hard through his nose.

Settlement Sunday that year was the last Sunday of term. In the same week David went down for three nights to the settlement, his qualification to assist in entertainment there that, keen on boxing, he was shaping into a useful boxer and was regarded as hot for his colours in the Public School championships at Aldershot at end of year. These were the first nights he had ever spent away from his mother and they were pregnant nights. At his parish church with one curate was Father Absolute; resident at the settlement was Father Tempest, Father Absolute's Chief-of-Staff down there; with him four Missioners (unpaid) who, if cleric, were young men just ordained, if lay, young men just down from the University. In either case they came for a term of three years only and then, in Father Absolute's genial phrase, were "flung out — booted — sacked!"

"We have to have a stream of new blood flowing through this place, through these alleys, through these gin shops, through these two-families-in-a-room-rabbit-warrens," Father Absolute, explaining his system, used to say. "We catch 'em young and fierce and lusty; and we set 'em roaring through the darkness, throwing off sparks; and then, before they've time to finish sparking, we fling 'em out and get some more. The idea is to catch one another's sparks, and add your own, and try to blow them into flames."

"Fine!" said David.

By day for his two days he saw the work of the settlement; all evening he held boxing classes and boxed himself, with shrewd, cunning boxers of the denizens of darkness, well above his weight; at night he slept with the Missioners in their big dormitory, on plank beds, two Missioners in, and two out "roaring through the darkness."

"Fine!" said David, returning to his mother with a contused eye, a tooth lost and a tender jaw. "Fine! they

are ripping chaps, Mother" — he meant the Missioners — "and as for Father Absolute — !"

His whole outlook had been given a twist, set to a new angle, by that sermon of Father Absolute's. The visit to the settlement, the hero worship of the plank-bed, spark-flying Missioners, the boyish admiration of gaunt, glorious, genial Father Absolute, confirmed the twist; and the foundation of his mother's training was there to receive and hold the angle as a bed of concrete newly laid, just setting, to receive and hold for ever an iron finger-post.

His mother noticed it, rejoiced at it; adhering to her resolution in the matter, said nothing to him about it; contented herself with thanking God for it — and waited for him to speak.

It was nearly a year before he spoke. He said then to her one day, quite suddenly, arising out of nothing that had gone before, "Mother, what am I going to do when I leave the Grammar? We ought to be thinking about it."

"We ought. What would you like to do, David?"

"I would like to go to Cambridge."

"If it can be managed, yes; but after Cambridge?"

"It could be managed, couldn't it, if I get a school?"

He was silent then for some moments after her assent to that. Then he said, "Mother, what about the Bateson? What about my trying for that? I believe I could get it. Mr. Douglas thinks so too."

She said, "The Bateson? But the Bateson means going into the Church, doesn't it?"

"Mother, I think I would like to go into the Church. I want to, Mother."

She kissed him.

The supremest moment of her life, the moment after which having lived it, she said she would be happy to die (and death already had noted her for early release) was

when she heard David preach his first sermon. Terminating his Cambridge and his Cuddesden Theological College course and becoming ordained, he was to serve his necessary licenceship to a curacy under Father Absolute. A bequest, since his first visit there, had been left to the settlement to provide a small stipend for one Missioner; and Father Absolute, always more than a little interested in the boy, had been able to effect thus the longing of David (unable to come unpaid) to do his three years of roaring through the darkness throwing off sparks. But his first sermon was preached and was heard by his mother, not in Father Absolute's stark East End Church, but at the evening service of the Priory Church of a fashionable inland watering-place, a beautiful and very large church, a crowded and well-to-do congregation. The vicar was a friend of Father Absolute's; David's mother was to be here for some months for a course of treatment; Father Absolute arranged for him to give two weeks' needed temporary help in the Priory Church before coming on to the settlement.

So his first sermon befell.

His mother, seated where she could see his face as he sat, desperately pale, beside the vicar, waiting his ordeal, had her heart bled for him for the agony of nervousness she knew him to be enduring. The vicar had spared him any conduct of the service until his moment came; and he appeared to her to be taking no part in the service, either in its prayers or its songs. She knew where his mind was: his mind was where it had been directed by Father Absolute, writing to him in reply to his letter of fears of his ordeal. "Do not think about what any one is thinking of you," Father Absolute had written. "Do not think about what you are going to say — you will have prepared all that long before. *Pray, man!* Pray, right up to the moment when you open your mouth, that you may

have inspiration to put across your message into *one* heart of the hundreds beneath you. Never mind about how poor you may think your message is. Whatever it is, it is God's, through you. Not yours — God's! That ought to be good enough! Your job is to get it into *one* heart, to send away *one* man or woman the happier for having heard you. *Pray, man!* Pray! Pray! Pray!"

She could see him praying.

Then at length the last moments for his prayer and for his ordeal of waiting were run out; and she felt as though her heart stood still while the verger, according to the ceremonial of the Priory Church, in black gown and carrying a cross, came to where he sat and bowed. He rose and knocked over some books as he moved from his place; and she saw the deep flush of pained embarrassment stain his pallor; and her heart, that had stopped, wept for him, then stood again, as though the hand she held against her breast clutched it and stilled it, while she watched him follow the verger the quite long procession to the pulpit steps, where the verger bowed again, and he bowed in response; then up the steps, his hand twice clutching at the rail, then standing there the briefest moment, every eye upon him, then in prayer.

She set down her hymn book, and knelt, and prayed with him.

The hymn ended. He stood up. All were standing, waiting for him to speak. She saw his lips move; no words came. Everybody, the whole congregation, was waiting for him and still he spoke not. She caught her breath. Ah! — very faintly, scarcely to be heard at the back of the church, "In the name of the Father ——"

A sound as of a great sigh, as if it too had been holding its breath, went up from the congregation; then an immense rustling, as sudden breeze through a forest, as it seated itself: some coughing; some settling; an enormous

silence then (clearly he could feel that enormous silence now as, seated in the train these more than dozen years thereafter, he recalled it) as it were a great gulf opened up before him, on the brink of which he stood, and into which he must precipitate himself.

But he had spoken, this time, immediately; and it was while his mother watched him, while she listened to him from those first almost inaudible words of his invocation to his utterance of his ascription, long since calm and steady in his delivery, that she lived, she had told David, the supremest moment of her life; the supremest moment, watching him, she had believed, that any mother suffered to watch or to imagine her son in supreme moment of his triumph — whether as captain leading his men into the breach, as surgeon cutting away death from life, as prince being crowned, as orator swaying multitude, as counsel, actor, poet, at a stroke contriving fame — could live. Their ordeal, she would have said, done, their laurels won, hot foot, in worldly setting, visible support about them, a pulse of triumph in the air; her son, alone up there, speaking, for the first time, into a stillness that could not but be still; standing, for the first time, before his fellow men as witness that another witness was come forth to testify to Him rejected of men, another standard-bearer to uphold against the myriad banners of materialism the standard of the Cross.

She had told him all that, in those words. How often, recalling them as he recalled them now, they had inspired him! The sermon — how poor, how bald, how carefully, daring no flights, kept merely to an elaboration and then a briefest application of one of the parables, it had been! Her praises — how clearly he could hear them now, how clearly see himself, as they walked home together in the dark, put his arm right round her, how clearly hear him-

self, " Mother, you will hear me preach over and over again now, with much more confidence next time and then with more and more, and then at last one day in a church of my own, Mother! Imagine it, Mother! "

He put up his hand and rubbed a twitching eyelid. She had died while still he was in his first year under Father Absolute.

His thoughts went eagerly again. The " at last " that was to hear him preach sermon in church of his own, at last was come! Roddy, sitting in the vicar's pew with Philippa and with Jumbo, was going to hear him! She had come into his life, Rhoda Pencliffe then, in his last year at the settlement to whose work, at first for two afternoons a week, she had come in response to a West End Drawing-room Meeting addressed by Father Absolute. Then that insatiable Father Absolute had started a crêche in connection with the settlement and the daughter of the wealthy and fashionable widow Mrs. Pencliffe had given all her afternoons and all her evenings to that.

David Quest's eyes, fixed apparently upon the cushions of the seat before him, saw, not the cushions, but Rhoda Pencliffe as the first time he saw her — standing with Father Absolute in the middle of the settlement hall, almost of his own height, golden-haired, very fair, flushed from her romping with her batch of children. The vision changed. He was alone with her in the office of the crêche, standing face to face with her, embarrassment between them, and she was telling him how he had looked at her when, at that same moment of his first seeing her, he first by her had been seen.

"Coming towards me across the hall," she smilingly had said, " as though you were coming at me out of your corner as you come out to your man on the big boxing

nights, stepping quick and short, your hands a little in front of you, your head up before you tuck it down — oh, coming *at* me!"

He had laughed. "How could you have seen? You were half turned away, I well remember."

Her reply. "But I was watching you."

His answer, and a pause first, and his tone then deep, a shade unsteadily, "Why were you watching?"

Slowly, in a deep tide so slow that he with ardent eyes could see its moving stain on cheeks, on brow, on temples, a crimson flushing of her face.

His voice: "They call you Rhoda. Do you know what I am going to call you?"

Shake of her head.

"Roddy. Do you know why?"

Again the gesture of negation.

"Because that will be my own name for you; because I want to have you for my own."

His arms about her; she abandoned to his arms; her face to his; their lips joined.

He stirred and glanced across the compartment. Deep in his retrospection he had forgotten almost where he was. His fellow traveller, deep as himself had been apparently, still sat with face averted, staring from the further window. He settled himself and lapsed to thought again.

The days, closing his time at the settlement, when the curacy at Frodsham was offered him, and when he was racked with misgiving whether, suffering their love to go to marriage, he should take Roddy, as she wished, from the easy surroundings to which she was accustomed to life on short of two hundred pounds a year. Deep offence to her mother, who strongly disapproved the match, would be entailed. Bad days!

Father Absolute had settled it for him.

Wrestling with his doubts, he had been sitting on the edge of his plank bed in the Missioners' room when a hand suddenly was on his shoulder and Father Absolute's genial voice in his ears. "David, as they say about here, why don't you marry the girl?"

Laughing, abashed, amazed, he had jumped to his feet. "Father — you know? How can you have known?"

"David, am I blind? Have I lived these years of mine fighting the devil and all his works without recognising love and all its works before very often lovers themselves have recognised it? What of my question; David, why don't you marry the girl, bless her sweet face, her heart of gold?"

David had pressed his hand. "That, of course, I knew you knew. Every one does." His face had darkened. "Father, how can I take her down from what she is accustomed to, to what she would have to share with me?"

"David, how can you refuse to lift her up to the supremely highest that life has to offer us, to protect love?"

"Father, in poverty?"

"David, when that girl — she is no more — when that girl Duchess of Minchester opened our bazaar last week, do you know what were her last words as I handed her into her car? Sally Bates was in the crowd. Just as the Duchess said good-bye, Sally gave a squeal you could have heard at the Bank and rushed past us and hurled herself into the arms of that hopeless husband of hers — you remember they let him out a day earlier than he had told Sally — and he flung his arms round her and hugged her fit to kill her. The Duchess watched them. I said to her, 'That is Sally Bates meeting her bloke; he's just come out of quod.' Do you know what she said, David? You know what an unhappy story her married life has been. She said, 'My God, how I envy her!'

and turned with no other word and went off in her Rolls car to her Grosvenor Square Palace, two chauffeurs on the box, coronet on the door, handkerchief to her eyes. Poverty! In marriage it is only poverty of love that matters to a woman, David."

Slowing of the train broke into his thoughts and — they were stopping at a station — carried his thoughts from happy then to gladdest now. He looked for the station's name — Westonbury. Westonbury! Here the Bishop was who, thanks to Admiral Bratton, had him noted down! Here, in the distance over there, you could discern the spire of Fontwych church. Fontwych! Here you changed for Kingston Berger, nearest station to Ashton Parva. Ashton Parva!

He was looking so eagerly from the open window that he was not conscious till he felt touch upon his shoulder that his companion in the compartment was wishing to leave the train and asking room to pass. He straightened up with quick apology and, to apologise the better, made to open the door for the man. "I am ever so sorry. Getting out here?"

"Yes, I change here," the man said.

His voice was so curiously subdued that David, engaged with the door handle, which was stiff, looked up at him. He saw a face in keeping with the voice. Haggard, he had thought it in the brief glimpse he had had of it on entering; and, thinly bearded, grey, deeply lined, infinitely haggard it presented itself as it looked down upon him now. But it was more than haggard. It had an utterly crushed look. David thought it the face of a man who had carried, as it might have been, an immense weight, an insupportable grief, and had gone down beneath it. The door came open. Himself so happy, so much within his grasp, he had a great desire to hand some

cheer to this one so stricken, whose face said all was lost. " At your journey's end? " he asked pleasantly.

The man turned stricken eyes toward him; his speech was made beneath his breath, a dreadful sadness in it. " My journey's end! " he echoed.

Sympathy for him tided up in David. How express it? " You will be glad to get home," was best that he could summon.

The man stared at him with those stricken eyes. " I have no home," he said.

He stepped out, stood irresolutely, drifted away and went from sight.

CHAPTER VII

STONE HOUSE

Miss Pasture's house was the only house in Ashton Parva built of stone and slate-roofed. All the others were either white, half-timbered and thatched, or mellowed red, of brick, and tiled. This gave the Stone House, as it was called, a distinctive appearance; and it was further distinctive among its neighbours by presenting on the considerable area which stood between it and the wood behind it ranges of wire-netting enclosures, wooden sheds and coops, wherein were accommodated the poultry which gave the eggs and the chickens which Miss Pasture marketed weekly in Laversham.

Stone House stood up the rising lane off the main road at the foot of which was Banjo Heritage's cottage; and if its outline, thanks to the material of which it was built, was a trifle stern and uncompromising by day, it had, in Banjo's view at all events, a curious attribute of softening down and taking on a something gracious aspect by dusk and on clear nights. At dusk the trees of the wood behind gave the appearance of having stolen forward about the house, rather as if (he had reflected) they were looking for their companions which Miss Pasture had had felled to make better clearance for her chicken runs; at dusk a light would appear in the window above the porch and it would remain there, uncurtained, throughout the night.

As you turned from the main road into the lane, Stone House, though a quarter of a mile up, standing on a sharp bend in the lane and on the considerable eminence to which the lane rose, faced you squarely. In daylight, bold and obdurate, it made Banjo think of Miss Pasture; at dusk, its outline softened, the trees drawn round, the light softly shining, it made him think of Mrs. Pasture. By day he could see Miss Pasture's tall figure stalking about among the chicken runs, and could imagine her hard, slightly prominent eyes; at night — all night if he choose to look — he could see that light burning in the uncurtained window and could imagine old Mrs. Pasture, who had placed it there, sitting, thinking along the direction of its rays, with her shawl drawn round her shoulders, much as the trees, thinking of their missing ones, were drawn up round the house.

He had the fancy that by day Stone House had the soul of Miss Pasture, by night the soul of Mrs. Pasture.

Miss Pasture sent her eggs weekly to Laversham market in a tradesman's delivery tricycle which she had purchased second-hand and adapted to her needs, substituting for the rather dilapidated wooden box which had been there an open wicker hamper of the style of a laundry basket. Laversham was twelve good miles from Ashton Parva, described by Mr. Glumday, the aged man who worked for her among the chicken runs, and part of whose duties it had always been to propel the eggs to market, as "a tidy push"; and Miss Pasture, four weeks after her attendance at the Heritage wedding, had experienced considerable annoyance by the development in Mr. Glumday of what he called a bone in his knee with consequent inability to perform the tidy

push, or indeed, as he affirmed, any length of push on the carrier tricycle any longer.

Mr. Glumday was a flat-faced man of about sixty, the lower outline of his flat face fringed with whiskers having the appearance, hue and texture of a species of lichen, and, like lichen, always of an apparently fixed density of growth; and the upper outline crowned, winter and summer, rain or shine, with a straw hat or helmet having the appearance, hue and texture of a decayed beehive. He spent the whole of his life, according to Miss Pasture, hiding himself in the last of the chicken sheds in which, whenever she wanted him, she had to hunt for him; and the quality in him, and there were many such, which exasperated Miss Pasture above all others, was that his face, beyond a settled gloom, never could be made to express any sort of emotion whatsoever.

"I believe," Miss Pasture had once exclaimed to him, driven nearly wild (as she said) by his entirely unmoved reception of her news that a fox had been among the best layers in the night, "I believe that if one of those chickens burst like a bomb before your very eyes you would look at it as if you had seen it happen twice an hour every day of your life."

"That's just it," said Mr. Glumday; and he had repeated, a further exasperating trick of his, the same phrase when, faced, as it were, with the bone in his knee, Miss Pasture had presented to him the problem of how, then, she was to get her eggs to market?

"That's just it," said Mr. Glumday, returning the problem unexplored.

"Bone in your knee!" cried Miss Pasture disgustedly. "It is just a lazy excuse. So have I got a bone in my knee; so has everybody!"

"Ah, but you ain't got my sort of bone," explained

Mr. Glumday patiently. "I've felt this bone coming in on me these weeks back on that there velocipede ——"

"*Will* you please not call the carrier tricycle a velocipede," cried Miss Pasture.

"On that there carrarrier tricycle, especially on the upstroke. Mind you, Miss, that's a tidy push, that is, into Laversham, even on a bicycle, leave alone a veloc — a carrarrier tricycle with near a quarter of a hundredweight of eggs behind you. Mind you, you can't go roaring down the hills, not with a load of eggs behind you, you can't. You ——"

"Roaring down the hills!" ejaculated Miss Pasture bitterly. "I have never seen you move out of a crawl in your life, whether on the tricycle or on your legs. Have you seen the doctor about this precious knee of yours?"

"I have, Miss," said Mr. Glumday portentously, "and he put a name to it that fair threw me into a sweat. He ——"

"What name?"

"I couldn't repeat it, Miss. 'Doctor,' I says to him, I says ——"

Miss Pasture, who normally kept on ice the voice with which she spoke to her social inferiors, reduced it several degrees below freezing and applied it sharply.

"Very well, if you cannot do what you are paid to do, I shall have to find some one who can, that is all."

"That's just it," said Mr. Glumday.

Miss Pasture clicked her tongue exasperatedly. To find some one to take Mr. Glumday's place at Mr. Glumday's wages and, slow and exasperating as he was, with his experience in chicken rearing, was, as he said, just it, and beyond, as she knew, the available labour for miles around. Some one must be found then, merely to take the eggs in once a week.

"How long is this ridiculous bone, as you call it, going to stay in your knee, do you suppose?"

"Ah, that's going to my grave with me, that bone is," said Mr. Glumday, revealing at the prospect, in so far as he was capable of revealing anything, that gloomy satisfaction which his class, making of ailments a species of hobby, find in discussion of them. "There's chaps about here as has had a bone in their knee forty year an' more," he continued, "an' gone to crutches with it in the end. 'Tis the chalk in the water does it, Miss, we reckon."

"Chalk in the beer!" amended Miss Pasture. "Who is there could be trusted to take eggs in, supposing I am kind enough to keep you on here, shirking your proper duty?"

Mr. Glumday peered through the ventilation shutter of the shed in which he had been found as if expecting to see a half dozen or so of trustworthy messengers on the strip of sky therein exposed. Returning his head from his inspection, "There's young Johnnie Giggs, Miss," he announced.

"Young Johnnie Giggs! I wouldn't trust young Giggs with a cast-iron egg, let alone a load of fresh ones."

"No, and no more wouldn't I, Miss," confirmed Mr. Glumday, "and that's a fact."

"Why do you suggest him then? What about young Peters?"

Mr. Glumday shook his head. "He couldn't sit to it, Miss, not to the velocipede, young Peters couldn't."

"*Will* you not call it a velocipede! Why couldn't he — sit to it?"

"He's a fair mass of boils, Miss, that there young Peters is. His ——"

"Stop! I warn you, Glumday, that if some one is not found to ride the tricycle, I shall bring in a man from

Laversham to do it, and to do your work too, if I have to give him a bed in the house. Now, then!"

With which Miss Pasture strode, black and doomful, from the hut; and as a result of which, watering plants before her front door that evening, she was accosted by a little man in a neat blue suit and a neat black bowler hat who came shining up the path, moustaches gleaming, eyes sparkling, planted himself squarely at attention before her and addressed her "Madam!"

"Madam, Mr. Glumday has told me that you require some one to ride your carrier tricycle into Laversham with your eggs every market day. Madam, if there is a thing I have wanted to do ever since I came into this village it is to ride that beautiful tricycle with that beautiful basket of beautiful eggs, and never seen it go by but I have turned to my wife and said so, Madam."

"I thought," questioned Miss Pasture, towering above the quivering Paddock and sending down her inferiors' voice from its cold storage at that elevation, "that you worked for young Mr. Heritage. Have you left his service?"

"Madam," said Paddock, who was one of those who will call a young woman miss though her wedding-ring finger be loaded from hand to tip with wedding rings, and an elderly woman madam, though she inform him of her spinsterhood at the outset of conversation, "Madam," said he, trembling with excitement at the possibility of a new employment, "I have not. Madam, my arrangement with Mr. Heritage is that I have one day a week off for the conductation, Madam, of my own house and affairs; and Wednesday, market day, is that day; and oh, Madam, if I might ride that beautiful tricycle into Laversham for you, a prouder man there wouldn't be in Laversham, Madam, not coming in his own car chauffeur-driven, Madam."

" Can you ride a tricycle? " unloaded Miss Pasture from her refrigerator.

Tears glistened in Paddock's eyes. " Madam, I have ridden tricycles ever since I was a little boy of six, Madam. Madam, when I was in the army, in the officers' mess, Madam, I had a bicycle especially allotted for my own use, Madam, I rode that bicycle, Madam —— "

" A bicycle is not a tricycle," came off the ice. " The steering is entirely different."

" Madam," declared Paddock, brushing his eyes with his hand and speaking as one who has just been reminded by a judge that he is on oath. " Madam, I *know* a bicycle is not a tricycle. Madam, I *know* the steering of a bicycle is not like the steering of a tricycle. Madam, I have told you that I have ridden tricycles since I was a little boy of six, Madam; and, Madam, I do most solemnly assure you that to get back to a tricycle is a thing that I don't suppose a day passes but I long to do, Madam. Madam, if I —— "

Engaged.

Market day in Laversham, as Paddock in his impassioned plea for and attainment of, the privilege of riding the carrier tricycle there, had stated, is every Wednesday; but the first Wednesday in the month is what is called Big Market day. It was on the day following a Big Market day that Miss Pasture had attended Pelham Heritage's wedding at St. George's; and it was immediately before the Big Market day next following that the sudden formation of a bone in Mr. Glumday's knee had (as seen) filled up for Paddock that aching desire to ride a tricycle with which theretofore his life had daily been darkened.

On this Big Market day, Paddock was to present himself at ten o'clock. Miss Pasture awoke and had for her

first thought that it was precisely a month since Pelham Heritage had married "that girl." How was he finding it now? she wondered. Too soon, no doubt, for his infatuation to have worn thin; but wear thin it would; he would find that sooner or later! What had a child like that to give to such as him? A pretty face! Of course it was the pretty face, and the stupid kittenish ways that would go with such a face, that had captured him. Pelham Heritage should have been superior to such.

But she did not blame him. It was the girl who had taken advantage of the weakness that all men, even the best, have, that she blamed; and she lay there a few minutes, her protuberant eyes very hard, her mouth set, blaming her.

She would have to speak to that girl soon. The couple already were in residence at Great House, had been there a fortnight. A short honeymoon! Was there any reason for that? Could he have tired so soon of dragging her about? Of course, there could not be; of course, he could not have. All the same ——

Funny that twice she had seen the girl (herself kept out of sight) and each time walking the lanes by herself. Funny! So briefly married, and twice alone. So briefly married and, each time seen, showing an expression on her face that certainly was not the look of expectant happiness her face had worn as she came down the aisle! Funny! What was the expression? Each time it had been different from the marked brightness in the church, each time had set Miss Pasture to thinking; and, lying on her pillow, she held the two expressions again before her eyes and thought upon them now.

On the first occasion — listless, the face of one who had nothing to do and was drifting out alone because she had nothing to do. But why should she have nothing

to do? The house with all its attractions, the attractions of an especially attractive house to a bride whose first own home it was, was there; Pelham was there. Why listless? Funny. But there! Pelham perhaps had had to be away for the day. Quarter Sessions perhaps were on, and he never, Miss Pasture knew, would let anything interfere with his filling his seat on the Bench, if he could possibly help it. Of course, that must have been it, or something like that. He must have been occupied somehow; somehow unable to give her his company. All the same ——

Nothing like that — a pucker of harder thought came between Miss Pasture's eyes — could be made to account, though, for the expression of young Mrs. Heritage's face on the second occasion. That was, make what qualifications you like, *troubled.* Yes, make what qualifications you like, call it perplexed, call it puzzled; it still was *disturbance* over *something.* Over what? Funny! And that sudden change in it, that sudden banishment of it, that sudden replacement of it by, distinctly, a flush and then a happy, unquestionably happy, smile. That was funny, if you like!

Miss Pasture's pucker of thought went harder yet, as mentally she visioned again the whole proceedings as her eyes quite clearly had seen them. She had been on a path above the wooded bank above the road proceeding towards Ashton Parva. Mrs. Heritage had been immediately beneath her, coming in the opposite direction. Miss Pasture had stopped and was intent upon that troubled look the girl carried, then suddenly had seen that flush, distinctly a flush, and that smile, unquestionably a happy smile; had looked backwards for the cause, and the cause was straight across the road, coming (of course) out of the King's Head Inn — Banjo Heritage.

Banjo Heritage had come straight to Mrs. Heritage,

cap in hand, smiling all over his face, and then had stepped along with her and walked away with her.

Funny!

Yes, that *was* funny — twice funny. Funny that they should seem so friendly on what could only be the briefest acquaintance, and *very* funny that they should have known one another at all. Pelham Heritage was not on speaking terms with his half-brother; it was astonishing that he should have let his wife know him. Did he know that she knew him?

Miss Pasture came to a sudden resolution, and as suddenly got up and began to dress.

Her first movement, dressed, was, as always, to her mother's room. Old Mrs. Pasture's bedroom was the best bedroom in the house and it was always spotless, always bright, always had flowers, frequently had the cretonne covers of the chairs and sofa changed from one of the three sets to another, because Miss Pasture, devoted to her mother, attended to this room entirely herself, even (and especially) to making the bed. Annie, the maid, was allowed to do nothing in the room. It occupied the front of the house, next to the room over the porch in which the light seen by Banjo was kept burning all night and with which it communicated by a door. Miss Pasture's room was at the back of the house, getting no sun, its door immediately opposite her mother's door. She could have had the third room in the front of the house, an altogether nicer room; and when they first came to Stone House, nearly twenty-two years before, that used to be her room. But she moved to the back room soon after her brother, Felix, went away, so as to be near her mother because her mother used to cry at night; and of course as the long years went on and her mother, never the same person since Felix went away, grew feeble

and then had a slight stroke and suffered a loss of memory, it became more necessary than ever to be near at hand, in case anything were wanted. To be immediately within hearing she always slept, too, with her door wide open, a practice she disliked very much but considered necessary and therefore had always told her mother she preferred it.

She was devoted to her mother.

She could not sleep in the little adjoining room over the porch, obviously convenient as, with its communicating door, that would have been, because that was Felix's room, kept for him by her mother always ready, bed made, hot-water bottle in it, light burning, in case he came back in the night.

Miss Pasture never would enter that room.

Her first action now, immediately she had affectionately kissed her mother, was to cross the room and close the communicating door, left wide open throughout the night.

" The light is out, I see. You have been out of bed to it. Oh, Mother dear, I do think you might leave it to Annie, getting out of bed in the cold like that! "

Extraordinary how her voice would moderate, her hard eyes soften, all her nature seem to melt and change, when she was with her mother! Old Mrs. Pasture, now, by the motion with which Miss Pasture always concluded the morning embrace, sitting comfortably propped with pillows, smiled on her worn old face that accustomed, most beautiful smile of hers, of which Banjo Heritage once had said, not very intelligibly, that it always made him think of buttercups; and on being asked by his listener (Mrs. Distaff) " Why buttercups? " could do no better than reply vaguely, " Oh, I don't quite know; that kind

of blaze of light you get across buttercups — across a whole field of buttercups, you know."

"Oh, *that* kind of buttercup," Mrs. Distaff had exclaimed. "You know, I don't think I like buttercups. Now if you had said, though even then I confess I am far from following you, *primroses.*"

"Yes, but I don't see primroses in her smile. I see that kind of golden haze of buttercups across a ——"

"*Have* you an ashtray?" Mrs. Distaff had inquired.

With that smile, "Lucydear, I cannot trust putting out the lamp to Annie," Mrs. Pasture, pronouncing, as was her custom, Lucydear as one word, replied. "She gets up so early — a good girl, Annie, Lucydear — that on these dark mornings I am so afraid that she might put it out before it is light, dear. It might be early morning that Happy will arrive and never a light to guide him unless I see to it myself, Lucydear, please."

Miss Pasture had no reply to this. She rarely could bring herself to reply when her mother spoke of her brother, particularly when she used his name and made it, as always, Happy; his childhood's pet name — a thief, a blackguard, an abandoned profligate, murderer of his mother's health, murderer of her own life since she was twenty-five. Thus she thought of her brother; and in silent thought of him she busied herself getting out the shawl, the cameo brooch, the lace cap, the mittens, the brush and comb, which were her mother's necessaries till it was time for her to rise.

When she turned with them, her face, that had been dark, was brightened for her mother. "And how did you sleep, darling Mother? I have not heard that yet."

Mrs. Pasture, who always called Felix Happy, and who so rarely in more than forty years had pronounced

Lucy without adding dear to it, that she had come to use Lucydear, one word, as her name, usually added "dear" to it again, as before. "Quite well, Lucydear, dear. Quite as well as I can expect. I got up once."

"Oh, Mother!"

"I thought I heard a sound, Lucydear, dear."

"Oh, Mother!"

"Now you look sweet, dearest Mother. Oh, sweet! I declare, I think this yellowish cap suits you best of all. Let me just show you in the handglass. Wait while I just brush that dear fringe again a moment. There! Now, there is your Bible. There's the place. There is the pencil. Now, quite all right till I bring up your breakfast? A loveliest poached egg this morning . . ."

The mother smiles that smile that brings the field of buttercups upon her face. The daughter amazingly softens towards her those hard eyes, that bitter mouth; then, out from the room and back to her own life, resumes them.

Together with the voice she keeps on ice for her inferiors, hard eyes and bitter mouth are brought at ten minutes to ten to shining Paddock, quivering in every limb as he hops sideways round the carrier tricycle, flicking at dust with a handkerchief very slightly dirtier than his collar; polishing the handlebars; flicking at the eggs which Mr. Glumday, standing by, has filled almost to the brim of the basket, eight plumpest chickens underneath; taking out an egg here and there, breathing upon it and polishing it.

"Madam, when I bring this beautiful tricycle back, I shall clean it so you scarcely won't know it, again, Madam. Madam, it's a right down cruel shame the way this beautiful tricycle has been neglected, Madam. Madam,

when that tricycle last had a proper clean I shouldn't care to say, Madam."

"Ask Glumday," suggests Miss Pasture coldly.

"That's just it," supplies Mr. Glumday helpfully; and Miss Pasture turns austerely to Mrs. Paddock who, as she has apologetically explained, has just "popped up" as she calls it, Mr. Heritage having given her permission, to see her husband actually start. "Better than to see him just go flashing by, ma'am," she has just said.

"There will be no flashing by there or anywhere else, I sincerely trust," says Miss Pasture, delivering the hope from her refrigerator and looking down with inclination only of the head from her comparatively statuesque height upon Mrs. Paddock who (with nothing on earth, either in her employment or her husband to be frightened of) is a frightened looking little woman with enormous black eyes always filled when being spoken to with the expression of one listening to a ghost story and petrified with the horrors of it.

"I have been warning your husband most strictly," continued Miss Pasture, "that he is on no account to go above six miles an hour at any place and to be especially careful down Blackdog Hill and down the hill from here to the corner by young Mr. Heritage's house. The road there is very steep and the turning very sharp."

"Oh, dear!" says Mrs. Paddock, eyes like black saucers.

"Madam," cries Paddock, leaping suddenly from flicking the eggs to position of attention before his new employer, "I shall be as careful with those beautiful eggs as if they were dear little babies, Madam. Madam, if I see so much as a stone in the road ——"

"What you have to remember," says Miss Pasture icily, "is that when you are riding this carrier tricycle you are

not riding an ordinary tricycle. The weight of the carrier makes the steering altogether different and not at all easy until you are accustomed to it —— "

" Oh, dear! " says Mrs. Paddock.

" Has Glumday explained to you about the brake? "

" Madam," said Paddock, tears of enthusiasm starting into his eyes, " I studied that beautiful tricycle last night till I know it like my own photograph, Madam. Madam, that brake is a perfectly good brake, Madam. It —— "

"It was a perfectly good brake when Glumday first had it," said Miss Pasture, turning her hard gaze upon that gentleman.

" That's just it," agreed Mr. Glumday, returning the gaze unabashed.

" Get away now! " continued Miss Pasture imperatively. " Too much time has been wasted already. Mount carefully and go down the drive carefully."

Paddock in one leap is at the tricycle. Trembling with excitement in every quarter of his body, glistening in every pore of his face and every hair of his moustache, he sidles on to the seat, puts eager foot upon the pedals and is rewarded by them flying round in reverse gear, crashing him on the shin, and jerking him face downwards upon the handlebars.

" Oh, dear! " ejaculated Mrs. Paddock, terrified.

" T'chk! " clicks Miss Pasture, exasperated.

" That's just it," pronounces Mr. Glumday, unmoved.

" Madam," cries Paddock, white, recovering himself. " My excitement —— "

" Do not *be* so excited. Take it calmly. Start now. Carefully round that flower bed! "

The near side wheel overruns the edge of the flower bed. The tricycle lurches. The eggs lurch. Paddock lurches.

" *Carefully,* I tell you!"

He disappears. Mr. Glumday disappears. Mrs. Paddock tries to disappear but is stayed.

" Mrs. Paddock, there is a matter I wish to speak to you about. I am coming down to the village; I will tell you as we go."

" Oh, dear!" says Mrs. Paddock, places herself deprecatingly beside Miss Pasture, and with goggling eyes listens as they go down the lane.

" Now that your husband is going to do this work for me," begins Miss Pasture, speaking down to Mrs. Paddock much as a very tall policeman in reproof, without bending, of a very miserable child, " he will be about the place from time to time and he may meet my mother. It is about my mother that I wish to speak."

" Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Paddock.

" There is no need to say ' Oh, dear.' The matter is merely something that I wish you to impress upon your husband most strictly."

" Oh, dear!"

" You know, as well, I suppose, as everybody else in the village appears to know, about my brother?"

Everybody in the village, and indeed in all the countryside round about, knows about Miss Pasture's brother for the good reason that Miss Pasture herself has told them. The wrong her brother has done her by his iniquity, condemning her to the life she leads lonely with her mother, is festered so within her that she meets never a stranger but she makes opportunity to discharge the wound she carries before that stranger has been many moments in her company. She is making opportunity now. Mrs. Paddock knows perfectly well what it is that she is to impress on Paddock about Miss Pasture's mother; but Miss Pasture is able to assume that she does not, and assumes it. " Everybody appears to know," she continues, in her voice

not only the especial bitterness that comes into it when she speaks of her brother but the especial edge of her tone to her inferiors, when implying to them the nature of their inferiority, gossiping or other, "that many years ago, twenty or more, when we first came here, my brother bolted with all my mother's money, embezzled it, if you know what that means."

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Paddock who did not, but to whom its horrid sound was as the arrival of the headless ghost in the story.

"You may well say so. It was a wicked, infamous deed. My father had recently died, leaving all to my mother, not a great deal, but sufficient for a comfortable life for my mother and me — very different from that."

Miss Pasture stopped and turned and swung a hand towards the grey stone house behind them.

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Paddock, turning also and peering in the direction indicated, as if expecting the ghost there to arise and thence come stalking.

Miss Pasture, returning her position, gazed silently, bleakly, across the landscape a moment, as if visioning there the different life hers might have been. She swallowed. "We were in London then. My mother thought she would like to live in the country and we bought this little house, my brother coming down for week-ends from where he was working — supposed to be working; he never did a day's work in his life. I was to come for week-ends too, once my mother had got over my father's death and was settled here. I was going in for singing ——"

She stopped and stood still again and watched again upon the horizon that different life hers should have been, those hopes, those triumphs, those dreams buried beneath the waste of twenty years. She swallowed again. "You can take the field path here and leave me. My brother told

my mother he could invest her money to infinitely greater advantage than as my father had left it. My mother let him sell out and release the money — and he released it and went off with it."

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Paddock.

"All I want to say to you," cried Miss Pasture, with sudden burst of voice, "all I am telling you all this for — is this. My mother never ceased to love my brother but his vileness of course was plain, even to her. She was always certain he would come back to her but she knew how vilely he had treated her. A few years ago she was taken very ill. She had a stroke. When she was better of it, she had completely forgotten every single thing about my brother's vileness. She was idolising him again as, before his vileness, she always used to idolise him. She thinks now that he has just gone away somewhere, and she is certain, every day and every night, that he is coming back — that is why she keeps that light burning in his room; everybody knows that. Well, she is not to be told about my brother. I do not know what the effect might be on her if she were told, and that is why I warn everybody who comes near her. That is why I am warning your husband. Everybody knows the truth about my brother; a chance word in her presence might tell my mother — who has forgotten it. You will please to impress that on your husband."

Miss Pasture had poured all this latter part from her mouth as if it burned her in its passage and she were violent to be rid of it. "Now go," she concluded violently; and Mrs. Paddock, mightily glad, climbed the fence and took the field path to Banjo Heritage's house and went.

By a field path some one else, not fifteen minutes before, also had been approaching the direction of Banjo's

cottage. Dawn Heritage, leaving Great House while yet breakfast had not been cleared away, passed down the drive, turned through the copse, emerged in fields, followed a path, and found herself led to the road at a point she did not immediately recognise. She was not entirely familiar yet with the grounds about the house, much as, alone, she had wandered them in her two weeks' sojourn there; and she was on this occasion taking no account at all of the direction in which her progress might be leading her.

She was too perplexed.

There had been an extraordinary incident between her and Pelham at breakfast. It had been the culmination of extraordinary incidents happening, almost daily, ever since they had come down here. She was beyond measure puzzled; she was a little frightened; she was a little angry.

Had she married a schoolmaster? Was she come to live in a prison?

In the road she looked about her, her thoughts checked by her uncertainty of her whereabouts; turned right; recognised in a few paces where she was; and had her thoughts go immediately into a different train. That high bank at the corner on the left was the bank of the garden of Banjo Heritage's house. She experienced a curious little tremor at the recognition.

At the corner was Banjo.

"Hullo! I am waiting to catch my man. He is doing a job into Laversham for a lady up the road and I want him to get me something. What's up with you, half-sister-in-law?"

Dawn laughed. "Nothing, half-brother-in-law. What should be?"

They had met a few times before. Banjo on the first occasion had accosted her and introduced himself, and

she had liked the jolly way that he had. Then they had met again, and thereafter she had thought sometimes of him until again they reëncountered. He was looking at her in a quizzical way now and she flushed slightly. When she flushed, he turned his eyes away and looked again along the lane down which he was expecting Paddock.

Then he looked back, quizzically still — or again — and answered her question. "I thought you looked a bit — moped. What are you doing, wandering about the place like this? When are you going to start hunting?"

This time she flushed quite deeply. He had put his finger precisely on the matter that had formed the extraordinary incident at breakfast. "I think I am not going to hunt," she said and, as he had done, looked away.

"Not going to hunt! Why, you were carrying on to me every time we met ——"

She looked directly at him. "Why did not you tell me, when I was carrying on, as you call it, that Pelham does not approve of hunting?"

He stared at her. "Does not approve of hunting!"

"You must have known he does not."

The eyes that held her own, showing first a blank astonishment, changed as she watched them to a sombre look of depth. She could see, as it were, the figures of thoughts moving dimly behind them. She had no idea what the figures were.

"I knew, of course," he said slowly, "that Pelham does not hunt."

"Well?"

"It never occurred to me that ——" He stopped.

"That what?"

She had intended to put a ring, frank, semi-bantering, into her voice. But the ring failed her. She saw, as it were, a stirring in those depths behind his eyes as of strong movement deep in a pool; and it emerged in a

sudden light upon his pupils; and she experienced again, more noticeably, that curious little tremor she had felt when she had realised her proximity to him a few moments before; and, robbed thus perhaps of the ring she had intended, her question had a flat dull sound. "That what? What never occurred to you?"

The light she had seen leap up in Banjo's eyes was cut away as if a hand had turned a switch. She did not know it had been flamed by vision from those depths, as by a watcher in a forest, of twilight, a timid fawn, of night, a dark-hued hunter in pursuit; she did not know it had been crushed away as by a startled foot thrust down to crush a spark that might ignite a forest. He pleasantly but with grave undernote, soberly but with disarming smile, said, "Half-sister-in-law of mine, I have a word in season to say unto thee. How good it is!"

She was glad of an excuse to smile. "Let me be judge of that," she smiled.

"Judge then, O half-sister-in-law. Pelham is a funny chap. He is ——" He paused. "He is one of the best. One of the very, very best; but like all the very best ones — I know, because I am one of them too — funny in patches, here and there, this little crank and that little crank. When you know them they make him all the more —" he paused again, "— lovable."

She did not know that his pauses had been that he might choke the temptation not to say what he had said. She only heard the commendations as he had pronounced them, and she was patently delighted. "Jolly fine!" she exclaimed. She put out her hand to him impulsively. "Do you know I just *wanted* some one to say that to me. I did not know that was what I wanted, but I know now. Jolly fine!"

He took her hand. "Ripping!" he smiled. "I told you how good my word in season was!"

A passing car edging them from the road had moved them round the corner towards his gate as he spoke. The gay note on which their interchange had ended enabled him, as he released her hand, to remark airily upon a clamor, a shrill sound and a shouting, that now came stridently down the lane towards them.

"What the dickens is that? Good Lord, it's Paddock! What a ——"

The last steep drop of the lane to where they stood terminated twenty yards above them in a bend. At hideous speed round the bend, on one wheel as it seemed, casting away a small shoal of eggs as was certain, came hurtling a carrier tricycle, bell furiously ringing, Paddock, white as a sheet, bellowing warning of his approach.

"Brake up, you blighted fool! Brake up!" Banjo shouted. "Look out, Dawn, look out. Damnation!"

He leapt with his exclamation and leapt only in the nick of time. Paddock was almost into him. "Sir —" bawled Paddock; swerved from him at the ditch; swerved, with more eggs discharged, almost to the hedge opposite; bawled "Sir —" again; flashed away; attempted to round the main road corner; did not round the main road corner.

A high wall, a ditch bounding it, fronted the lane. The tricycle, hurtling at prodigious speed, appeared actually to leap the ditch, to run up the wall and along the face of the wall. Concluding this astounding feat, it plunged itself, wheels upward, into the ditch at foot. Only its wheels, rapidly revolving, stood in view. Paddock was not in view.

In paroxysm of mirth Banjo threw both hands aloft

and came then down to his haunches on the road. His yell and then his echoing yell of laughter could have been heard at Malford Regis. Dawn, flat against the hedge into which she had flung herself, gave sounds of dangerous hysterics. They cried and shrieked with laughter. Banjo stamped and writhed about the road in agonies of laughter.

Dawn was the first temporarily to recover. Between her wails of laughter, " He will be smothered! " she managed to effect. " His head is in the basket. I saw it come down on his head. Banjo, help him! "

Banjo could not help. He had thrown himself beside the road. " I am dying! " he choked. " Oh, my goodness, I am dying —— "

There was no need to help. Enormous convulsions of the tricycle ended in a great bound of the carrier basket. There appeared from the ditch as it were an immense yolk of an egg, born on blue-serged legs.

A louder yell went up from those who writhed in pain.

" Oh, my gosh, my gosh, my gosh! " choked Banjo. " This is killing me! "

" Oh, dear, oh, dear, oh, dear," cried Dawn; "I shall die! "

" Ploof! " spluttered the enormous egg, expectorating quantities of yolk and shell. " Ploof! Ploff! Phoff! Phut! Tcheu! Tcha; Phoof! "

" PADDOCK! " a voice came.

Miss Pasture had come.

In a little while Miss Pasture, stepping back from an address to the unfortunate Paddock which by its blasting rays might well have scorched, cleaned and entirely consumed the rich curtain and festoons of yolk in which,

still ploofing, tcheuing, and phutting, he stood enmantled, gave her attention to Banjo. " As for you, Mr. Heritage, if you see anything to laugh at, — " Her fury stopped her.

Banjo was wiping his eyes. " Oh, Miss Pasture, I ask you! " he faltered. " Anything to laugh at! Oh, be merciful, be merciful! I am terribly, dreadfully sorry about this. But anything to —— "

" Phoof! Phut! Pluff! Tcheu! Tcha! Phoof! " from Paddock; and Banjo shook both fists towards him. " Paddock, for the sake of reason, stop those diabolical noises! If you set me off again —— Miss Pasture, I know it must seem rude; but anything to laugh at! Oh, I ask you! "

Miss Pasture turned upon Dawn. " Mrs. Heritage, you too have found this rather funny —— "

But Dawn's laughter had been checked. She had been staring, and she still stared, at the face that surely, unmistakably, was the face that so balefully had stared upon her at her wedding. " I am desperately sorry, desperately ashamed — " she said.

Miss Pasture twisted a smile upon her lips. " This is the first time I have had the pleasure of meeting you. Not an auspicious meeting. I mean no reproof to you. To you, as a stranger, doubtless this seems very funny now. I believe it may not seem so funny as it appears. I did not know you knew Mr. Banjo so well. If I meet Mr. Pelham I will tell him where to find you. Good morning, Mrs. Heritage."

She went.

" Well, that's that," said Banjo, " and very nice and friendly of her, I am sure."

But Dawn was staring after her. " Banjo, who *is* that woman? "

Banjo was indifferent. "You had better get a brush to that skirt of yours, hadn't you. Miss Pasture? Oh, I will tell you all about her. Come along in. Dear me, I feel as if I had been beaten all over."

He opened his gate. Dawn went in with him.

CHAPTER VIII

GREAT HOUSE

WHAT Dawn had termed in her thoughts the extraordinary incident at breakfast, the incident on which Banjo had put his finger when he spoke to her of her hunting intentions, had arisen out of her suddenly and definitely pinning Pelham to the hunting question after many openings of the subject into which she had gone hot-foot only (as now she realised) to be drifted off into generalisations, from generalisations into side tracks, from side tracks into other matter altogether.

They had been sitting at their accustomed breakfast occupations, Pelham with the *Times* propped before him; she at his right hand, enjoying her meal, enjoying the news and the comments on the news he gave her; not particularly enjoying the long silences which his preoccupation with some article occasionally imposed upon her; but content enough to wait till he should look up with his "Ah!" of a point digested, and with his grave, kind smile at her, and with his "This foreign dairy-produce situation is very interesting. The Board of Trade——"

This *Times*-at-breakfast development had begun immediately they came to Great House after their short honeymoon spent in London, in a service flat. Brevity of the holiday, and that it should be passed in London, both had been her ideas. Pelham's intention had been at least a month or two abroad, somewhere into the sun, the South, Madeira, a Mediterranean cruise. But she had cried out in mock dismay at that. "Oh, Pelham, somewhere *out* of the sun,

out of *that* sun. I am sick to death of that sun there. I never want to feel it again. The English sun, Pelham, the English greyness without any sun, the England at Ashton Parva!"

He had laughed and kissed her and without a protest agreed. "I want you to have what you want."

And she had prolonged their kiss. "You are giving me all, all I want."

Happy! Happy!

She was all, her point gained, for going down to Parva at once, at longest within a day or two; but there he could not quite meet her. At least a fortnight must be let elapse, he said. To go sooner would look strange, would be unusual. It would be remarked upon.

"Remarked upon? Oh, but by whom?"

"Oh, by my friends, even by the villagers, by the neighbourhood generally."

"But whatever would they say?"

"Oh, nothing of the least intention, of course, nothing of any purpose. Just 'Hulloa, they're back soon?' 'Short honeymoon, eh?' Just things like that."

"Well, but things like that — they are nothing at all."

They were in the service flat, the evening of their wedding, seated together on the sofa, and he had just told her (they had scarcely seen one another since her arrival in England, her grandparents cherishing her till the last moment) that he had engaged the rooms for two weeks. He got up and stood, a shade pontifically, before her. "No, they are nothing at all, remarks like that, I agree. But they are remarks, criticisms of a kind, however meaningless; and in my position in the county, in my, in our class of life, one does not do things that are remarked upon, one does the things that are done."

She looked at him a little curiously. "That sounds like the Grandies over again."

He accepted that pleasedly. "Of course it does. Of course about things like that your grandparents would think just the same."

She a trifle narrowed her eyes at him, but she was no more than idly curious. "But, Pelham, I thought that in England all those ideas, all that doing things because it is the convention to do them stuff, were entirely of the past. All the English illustrateds, and novels, and *Punch* and all those, tell you quite plainly how things have changed, how free and easy and independent everything and everybody is in England now."

He laughed. "My dearest, you must not take your ideas of English society from the illustrated weeklies and from novels, nor from *Punch* which only puts up modern extravagances to get the laugh by showing how extravagant they are. There is a side that does those things, behaves in those fashions, of course; but it is very far indeed from being representative of anything except of itself. Those people take a pride in outraging all the traditions; we find our pride in observing them. Coming back to what I was saying about not doing things that are remarked upon; it is not that one minds what people say; it is that one comports oneself so that people have nothing *to* say."

"Well, a fortnight — in London — will be jolly," was her comment.

"We will make it so," he said fondly, and advanced and touched the rare piece he had acquired; and his little homily, which had caused her to eye him curiously, was entirely forgotten — for the time — in the choosing of theatres to see, restaurants to visit, interesting people to meet.

Happy! Happy!

But she recalled that little homily in time very briefly to come and had the feeling that it was the first, ever so smooth, movement of the turning of a key upon her.

The *Times* at breakfast, and everything that it connoted — resumption, immediately the Great House atmosphere received him, of his ordered habits, of his habitual order of his life and of his mind, slipping back into them as easily and as closely as a hand into a glove — was the second movement of the key. In London, his hand was naked, free, held up as it were to feel the play of the air upon his fingers and enjoying the play. At Great House his hand, all his comportment of himself, was gloved, dressed, restrained. In London he gave her every hour for her own and he appeared — she noticed that and remarked upon it — to enjoy the theatres, the restaurants, the dancing, no less eagerly, no less freshly, than herself.

"You know," she laughed at him across their table at the Berkeley one night, rushing the meal rather, not to be late at the show that was to follow it, "You know, I believe you are simply loving this as much as I do — night after night; and I could scarcely have believed that you would."

He had almost blushed, almost as if caught out in one of the things one does not do; and with the colour had smiled at her across the top of his champagne glass, held towards her. "I am loving it. I do not do this kind of thing very often. It is almost as new to me as to you. And more than that, I am loving it because I love you. It is you I love."

Half his years, half his sobriety of air, were fallen from him in those sentences and in that gesture. The ungloved hand enjoying the breeze!

At Great House much different.

At the first breakfast there the *Times* had been laid beside his plate and he took it up immediately he sat down and opened it. "You will not mind my glancing through the paper? It is as much part of my breakfast as the coffee."

She did not, a bit. Her place had been laid at the foot of the table opposite him. She took up her plate and brought it down to his end. "But I will sit here where I can see you.

Jessop, bring the tray here, please, and always lay me here at breakfast in future. Hidden from me behind the paper will never do!"

She could see he was waiting for the butler to leave the room before he spoke. When Jessop had closed the door, "That was a very sweet action of yours," he said. He put his hand on hers. "You are very dear to me."

She returned his pressure. Then she asked, "Why did you wait all that time before you said that?"

He was folding back the paper. "One has to remember oneself before the servants."

The key!

Immediately he arose from breakfast he had announced himself as going to his study, then to his office. He had two working rooms. His study, a fine apartment, book-lined, where his letters and his art and book catalogues would be set out for him; and his office, a barer room, where he dealt with his business matters, the accounts of his small estate — the Guernsey herd, the farmery and the woodlands — and with his duties as Justice of the Peace, as chairman of the local rural district council, as member of the Westonshire County Council, of the Territorial Association, of various Laversham institutions, of the Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for Agriculture to inquire into rural industries: with his duties in perhaps a dozen or so of the interests of a country gentleman who realises the obligations of his position, who preserves the old traditions, who does the things that, in one's position, one ought to do. "I shall be busy, always," he had said, "till luncheon. You too, will soon find it the same with your time. This morning you will no doubt like to have a talk and a round with Mrs. Omeroyd. After luncheon I will show you some of my treasures and then perhaps the farm or a run in the car. You will not be having callers for a day or so. Well, well, I must get along."

The glove!

Mrs. Omeroyd had not occupied her an hour. They had breakfasted at half-past eight, the established time. By ten she had found herself with the morning before her — and nothing to do. She had idled here, idled there, then gone impulsively into his study and smiled radiantly upon him from the doorway.

He had looked up with knit brows, had smiled absently at her.

"Ah, keeping busy?" he had said. "So am I; deep."

And she had — in her own expression of it to herself — "backed out"; then wandered off.

The key!

The glove and the key — his routine, accustomed, unvarying; her restraints, intangible yet saturating the air; imponderable yet oppressive about her as thunder in the atmosphere — both were in her mind when, on the morning of the Paddock hurtle down Banjo's lane, and not two hours before it, she had pinned him straight to the hunting question and had sat through the extraordinary incident to which it gave rise.

The glove and the key! It was with the action of removing the one and turning back the other that suddenly she put out an impulsive hand and laid it squarely upon the portion of the newspaper on which his eyes were directed. "Pelham, when are we going to start hunting?"

He looked up, less startled by her action than surprised at it. Rough interruption such as that — the newspaper disarranged, the stand nearly upset — were the kind of things one did not do. But when he had looked up he saw, immediately, that it was her disturbing words, not her disturbing action, that must have his attention. He had eluded this matter of hunting even when she had run it so close as, visiting the stables, remarking on the empty loose

boxes and inquiring, "Where were the hunters?" It was not to be eluded now.

He folded the paper carefully and placed it carefully beside him. Then he spoke.

"To tell you the truth, I do not know that I am going to hunt."

"Not going to hunt! But, Pelham, you must not say such a thing! It will not be half the fun, not a quarter, doing it without you. Starting out together to the meets, and hacking home, and in the evening going over every inch and jump of the runs! Oh, more than half the fun! Pelham, you cannot possibly mean that!"

He turned squarely towards her. "To tell you the truth, I am afraid I mean a good deal more than that."

She was forced, by his manner, to an incredulous guess at what more it was that he meant. But it was too incredible! But, incapable of crediting it, she yet was forced to exclaim, admitting her apprehension, "More than that!"

"I am afraid I mean that I do not approve of hunting."

"Not — approve — of hunting!"

He said quite quietly, too quietly for her incredulity, for her tumult of thought. "Dawn, I flatly disapprove of it."

"But, Pelham — !" She could not believe it. "You are joking!"

He shook his head. "I am far from joking."

She stared at him. She felt tears coming behind her eyes; not tears of disappointment, tears of bafflement. "But this is amazing!"

He said, quite kindly, "Amazing or not —" and left the blank for her to fill.

She blinked her lids. "But, Pelham, out there in Italy, when you knew, when I told you, over and over again, how crazy to hunt again in England I was, you never said a word —"

"Dawn, you cannot remember that I was — enthusiastic."

"I remember — I noticed — nothing of it, of your side of it; I was too excited, too utterly absorbed. But certainly, if you had shown a hint, a breath, a suspicion of this that you now tell me, certainly I should have noticed that. I would have been in alarm at once. I would never have ——"

She checked herself. Her thoughts, rushed forward along the incompletion of her sentence, presented to her the man she had married in an aspect in which, eager only for all that his coming to her out in Italy meant to her, grateful beyond measure to him for it, she never yet had examined him. She never had examined him at all. She only had sprung to him as, in prison, a captive to a rescuer. But now? But recently? The shell into which he had betaken himself immediately with their coming here? The cage into which, down here, already she was being cramped?

What nature of man was this? A man of what nature of mentality was to be revealed to her by this mentality towards her dearest pleasure?

She said, "Pelham, this — this is astonishing to me. Disapproval of hunting? Pelham, tell me what it is that you mean by disapproval?"

He got up and walked to the window and looked out. Then he turned back to her. "I reprobate hunting."

"Reprobate." She winced inwardly at the phrase. A stilted, pompous word; and she realised at that moment how frequent was his use of words pedantic such as that.

He went on. "I consider it an inhuman, a barbarous sport. Its own word proclaims that it is barbarous — *hunting*: to hound to death, to harry to kill. That is not sport, Dawn."

His use of her name softened his choice of his phrases. They began as indictment; and she would have answered

him impulsively. But they ended as appeal; and, thus appealed to, remembering all for which she had cause to love him, yet examining him therefore with the more surprise, it was wonderingly that she answered. "But, Pelham, you eat meat — butchered meat?"

He stared at her. "Eat meat? Of course I eat meat. Whatever has that to do with it?"

The position between these two suddenly was that position in human intercourse, at once so common and so disastrous, so natural to our nature of the flesh and so unnatural to our nature of the spirit, wherein each of two parties in contact expects the other to see with his own eyes, speak with his own lips, hear with his own ears, understand with his own understanding. To be asked, his thought was, if he ate meat when he was reprobating the inhumanities of hunting! To be attacking, her thought was, the sport of hunting and not to appreciate there was barbarity in slaughtering animals to eat their meat!

But her tone remained only wondering, not sharpened as his had become. "Why, yes, meat, Pelham — cattle, sheep, pigs; breeding and cossetting and fatting just for the purpose of massacring, in cold blood, roped up, tied down — to gorge. Pelham, is that better than running a fox to try and kill him, and to do yourself and your horse and your hounds the most glorious good that can be at the same time?"

He was as surprised at her as she at him. He had anticipated a trifle of disappointment; he had not imagined opposition. He was not accustomed, in his own house, to opposition. He made an impatient gesture. "Ah, these are sophistries," he said. "It is necessary to eat meat. It is not necessary to hunt foxes."

She *could* not understand him. If he had always been bigoted on this subject, yes; some people were. But he had never till now said word against it. It was her complete

misunderstanding of him that astonished her. It was her belief that he was one thing, the man he had been in Italy, in London; and her suspicion, not by this incident alone, but by the light that it threw upon a dozen changes in him here, that he was another, that troubled her.

She said, "Necessary to eat meat! Pelham, I will let go that it is not necessary, that you can be a vegetarian. I am not — what was that funny word you used? — not *reprobating* slaughter houses. I am just saying that if I were an animal, ten thousand times rather than have my throat cut or be poleaxed, and be delivered to it by the hand that had fed me and protected me and that I trusted, ten thousand times rather I would choose a run for my money in the free life I loved and with a sporting chance of escape. One is cold-blooded doom; the other — Pelham, you *do* see that, don't you?"

He said seven words. "What is it that we are discussing?"

His brevity, his tone, his look, dried up the founts of her appeal as a hand at her throat. She felt again the tears behind her eyes. She said, "Of hunting."

He looked at his watch. "Well, you have heard my views."

She said, "Does it mean——" Her voice caught. "Do your views mean that I am not to hunt?"

The catch in her voice did not come of her loss of her pastime. It came of her realisation of her loss of her liberty, of her realisation that she was asking for, and must accept, a command. But the other was his interpretation of it. All the Heritages kill their wives, Lady Vestibule had said. Pelham Heritage loved his bride deeply; but it did not occur to him, it was not in his psychology to imagine, that the relations between him and his wife were other than that, within reason, for her good, for their mutual well-being, it was his to tell, hers to do. He thought that he had

merely crossed a whim and he was genuinely pained that it should cause her pain. He went to her and put out a hand and touched her shoulder. "Dawn, this is a stupid, wretched business. It should never have come up in this form. I blame myself. My dear, it is not only, it is far from being only that I disapprove of hunting. The case is that I disapprove, most strongly, particularly in this centre, of the people who hunt."

Immediately she was wondering at him anew. "But, Pelham! But Pelham, I always think that hunting people, all of them and everywhere, are the very nicest, jolliest people. On Dartmoor, with my father and mother——"

He withdrew his hand from her shoulder. His wave of sympathy for her a little abated. He had expected response to his kindliness. He had not expected opposition on this new aspect to which he had brought the matter.

His words were, "Particularly in this centre, I said."

"Pelham, I cannot imagine how that can be. On Dartmoor we only knew the hunting people. Once or twice we went up to Sherborne, to friends of father's, and hunted with the Blackmore Vale, three or four times into the Beaufort country. Wherever we went we only knew the hunting people."

He said, "The difference here is that the hunting people are the only people I do not know."

She was silent.

He waited a moment, then he turned and went to the door. The thing was ended.

It was not ended.

"Pelham."

He stopped and looked back.

She was not looking towards him. She was sitting, hands on her lap, looking towards the window.

He said, "Yes? You called me?"

From her pose and from the tone, almost inaudible, of

her voice, she might not have been speaking to him. "Pelham, it is going to be very dull for me here."

He came forward a step, amazed. "Dull?"

"What friends am I to have?"

"What friends? You have had callers every day. We have had two dinner parties in little more than a fortnight. Twice next week we are dining out. Friends?" He strung off a list of names familiar to her and repeated, "Friends?"

She monotoned, still looking from the window, "Of my age, of my tastes. Twice I have seen people about here going to the meets. Those are the kind of friends I mean, the kind I want to make."

He in part pitied her, sitting so forlorn like that; in part was vexed by her, so unable to see what he could see. He would be kind, but to be kind he must be firm. He said, "Dawn, those are the kind of friends I will not have you make. I am much older than you. I will not say much wiser; I will say much more experienced. Those people you have seen, the Piers Castle set, the Wallop Hall set, all that class of person—no, those are not the people I would have my wife meet, much less associate with."

At that she turned to him. "The Piers Castle set! Your own cousin!"

He was opening the door. "I would as soon have you associate with my own brother, with that Banjo down there."

He was gone.

He could not have guessed, remotely, the thing uppermost in her mind as he left her.

She had been told by him, on the evening of their first coming down, of Banjo—of his habits that made his name a byword in the villages, of his deliberate malice that had caused him to plant himself down there almost at Great House gates solely to give Pelham annoyance. She

had met Banjo, passed him and been stopped by him, and had found him, far from all that Pelham had represented him to be, entirely delightful and with no sort of trace (visible to her eyes) of the failing that was alleged to be his. Of course she should have mentioned the meeting to Pelham immediately on her return. Knowing his intense dislike of Banjo, she had not done it immediately: not having done it immediately she had felt it increasingly difficult to do it later. She had met Banjo again: again she had not told immediately; again increasingly difficult when a meal, then a night, then a day had been permitted to elapse without telling him. "Why did you not tell me at teatime?" Hard to say. "Why did you not tell me last night?" Harder. "Why did you not tell me this yesterday?" Hardest. If she could have said, "Oh, I met that Banjo brother of yours when I was out; actually, he came up and spoke to me! Oh, detestable, I thought him." If she could have said that —easy. But, "I met your brother this morning. Pelham, I thought him delightful!" Impossible!

However she would slip it out, she promised herself, sometime. His name would be mentioned and she would cry, "Oh, that *reminds* me. How stupid of me! I never told you that the other day, what do you think——"

But the thought uppermost in her mind as Pelham closed the door and was passing to his study was that Banjo's name had now been mentioned, and she had not been—reminded.

Why?

CHAPTER IX

THE COTTAGE

IMMEDIATELY Dawn entered Banjo's cottage with him to get, as he had said, "a brush to her skirt", there fell from her, as a cloak dropped at the doorway, the vague dis-ease that had invested her at recognition in Miss Pasture of the woman who had stared upon her at her wedding, at the hostility of her manner, at the apparent meaningness of her remark that, should she meet Pelham, she would tell him where to find her. Why had she stared so at the wedding? Why so hostile now in manner? How should she assume that Pelham was not cognisant of this friendship? What business, in any case, of hers?

As a garment shed, all this dropped from her when, the inner door pushed open by Banjo's hand behind her, the threshold of his sitting room was beneath her feet.

"But, Banjo, this is delightful! Oh, but I do like this!"

"Not too bad," agreed Banjo. "Pass yourself in. Find a seat. I can recommend that sofa."

She advanced, murmuring pleasure. "I should say you can, by the look of it! And that bay window! And that old fireplace! And that old bureau! And so warm, so sunny, so snuggy! Oh, jolly, jolly!"

She felt very happy. She had been past, when suddenly she had encountered Banjo at his corner, the peak of the mood — of puzzlement, of bewilderment, slightly of anger, slightly of fear — in which she had left Great House after the breakfast incident and had wandered, aimlessly, on to the high road. She had stepped down from that peak to milder air of perplexity only at Pelham's attitude; to mis-

giving that herself was to blame for suffering that perplexity in regard to one to whom she owed so much and brought so little. When she recalled him as she had shown himself to her in London, in Italy, she was wrong, she felt sure, and base; she had misgiving, in judging him as other than lovingly intentioned towards her in this matter of hunting and in this matter of friends. When he saw how keen she was, how much the hunting meant to her — but she had shown him instead only incredulous, rather stupid argument — he would give way, she was certain.

She was just in the mood, when she met Banjo, to hear something reassuring, something stabilising, of Pelham; and Banjo had said it — "A funny chap, but one of the best, the very, very best"; and she had been jumped out of the last of her misgivings and had cried, jumped out, "Jolly fine!"; and then immediately had followed that grotesque exhibition of that man with the eggs and she had laughed till she cried and all the final mists of the morning had dissipated in her healthy shouts of laughter — and here she was, in this engaging room, so different from the slightly oppressive formality of the Great House apartments, and with this jolly Banjo, so different from the people who had called upon her, whose houses she had visited.

Yes, she felt very happy.

She was flitting about, examining things. Banjo was standing before the fire, watching her, not smiling.

She paused before the bureau she had admired. "I love this. I would like to steal it. Queen Anne. I am getting very learned about antiques; Pelham teaches me. I love this Queen Anne period. Pelham has nearly all Jacobean."

"Jacko, I call it," Banjo said. "Jacko — good for funeral furniture; not good to live with, Jacko."

She laughed. "You would shock Pelham if he heard

you say that." She turned towards him. "You do shock him, Banjo, you know. Why do you shock him?"

He stood on his heels, then brought his toes down flatly. "Because I am shocking."

She looked at him. "You have got very — taciturn all of a sudden."

He was looking at her steadily. "I am — taciturn, because I like watching you looking at things. Go on looking."

She turned away.

In the briefest moment thereafter: "Well, tell me about this bureau," she said. "It is locked."

"Yes, but the key is in it."

"Do you write at it?"

"No, I write — when I write — at that table."

"And the bureau — for what?"

He appeared to shake off a restraint. He came quickly across to the bureau and turned the key. "For my cellar." He raised the flap and lowered it. There stood revealed decanters, bottles, a seltzogene, glasses. "Neat, eh? No use offering you a drink, I suppose; I am afraid it is only hard stuff, very hard. But to offer myself one — much use."

He was smiling gaily now and he took up a decanter and glass and poured a drink.

She had moved away a pace or two. She returned his smile but the look in her face was a little troubled. "I would call it early," she said. "You cannot possibly want a drink at this hour, Banjo?"

He was adding soda water. "No, but my system," he said with mock gravity, "requires it."

The trouble in her eyes was clearly her uppermost emotion; but she gave a slight laugh. "Your system!"

He turned to her, glass in hand; she noticed that the hand trembled a little. "My system is extraordinarily sensitive. In any kind of upset ——"

"What upset has it possibly had this morning?"

He looked at her a moment. Then he said, "Paddock, those eggs; must you see an earthquake before you see an upset?"

She shook her head. "That was no upset in the sense of — of upsetting your nerves. That was the most glorious joke that ever happened. It ought to have done you good. It did me."

His eyes maintained the same regard — hesitation, dubiety — as that with which he had looked at her before he said that Paddock's upset was the upset that had shaken him. "Well, if you want to know what it is that is upsetting me," he said, "if you want to know ——" He looked at the glass, untasted yet. Then he put it down. "No, you had better not. I will get that brush."

Some intuition bade her not to press him. He was absent a little time. She stood all that time perfectly still where he had left her.

She heard him laughing; then he had opened from without the door through which he had disappeared and was standing there, his face quite changed, alight now with fun, beckoning. "Do come! The egg merchant unegging! You can't miss it!"

She went to him into the kitchen. From the farther door were sounds of running water and sounds as of a grampus bathing: "Phoof! Ploof! Phaff! Poof! Phut!"

Banjo put fingers to lips and tiptoed towards the sounds, beckoning again. She tiptoed to him. Her eyes, as his, were dancing. She was loving this. She was delighted to throw herself into it out of the restraint that, in the sitting room, had threatened between them. "But, Banjo! Is he in a bath? I mustn't!"

"You would think he was in the Atlantic by the sound of him. No, only under the scullery pump. You stand there. They won't see you."

He opened the door.

"Phoof! Ploof! Phaff! Phoof! Phar, Phut!"

Mrs. Paddock, saucer-eyed, was working the pump; Paddock, shirt rolled back at the neck, sleeves to his armpits, was under the pump. Stern of the blue serge trousers was at that moment backing away from the sink; arms in the rolled-up sleeves frantically gesticulating and groping.

"Phoof! Ploof! Phaarph! Phitt! Phut!"

"Towel!" commanded Banjo. "Give him the towel, woman!"

"Oh, dear!" cried Mrs. Paddock, starting, releasing the pump handle, grabbing for a towel and dropping instead an apron on the dripping head.

"PHOOF!"

"Towel! You've given him an apron!"

"Oh, dear!" cried Mrs. Paddock; and a towel this time dropped; and the Paddock head worked in it by the Paddock arms with as much noise and commotion as if a suffocating bear were being rolled in a blanket; and the blue serge stern slowly assuming upright position.

"Paddock," said Banjo, "if you could perform that trick cyclist act of yours at the music halls——"

"Sir," said Paddock, emerging from the towel and displaying the remarkable effect of one moustache bedraggled and on his chin and the other mysteriously still stiffly egged and horizontal. "Sir, that tricycle is the rotten worst old scrap heap of a tricycle——"

"It is now," agreed Banjo.

"Sir," cried Paddock, shaping the towel with astonishing dexterity into an enormous turban and bringing his released hands smartly to his sides, "Sir, that rotten old scrap heap of a tricycle was away with me the instant minute I came out of the gate, sir. Sir, that brake was no more use to that tricycle, sir, than a razor strop to a steam roller, sir. Sir——"

"Your trouble was," said Banjo, "that you couldn't ride a tricycle. Any fool could see that."

"Sir," protested Paddock, tears starting into his eyes at this aspersion. "Sir, there's not a man in this country could have steered that tricycle as I steered it, sir. Sir, there was a pig in that lane the size of a barrel of old ale, sir, that not another man in England could have passed, not at the rate I was travelling, sir. Sir, if it hadn't been for that wall, sir, I'd have been into Laversham by now, sir. Sir, if I had had another inch and a half of clearance, sir ——"

"Paddock," said Banjo, "if you had had a mile and a half of clearance you would have made a mile and a half worse mess of it than you did. Point is that you have wrecked a week's load of eggs and a tricycle of a lady who can't afford to lose 'em; and what you had better do is to tell Miss Pasture that it was entirely my fault, that I got in your way and made you wreck the ship instead of wrecking me, and that I quite admit it and am going to pay the racket. Tell her that, see?"

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Paddock.

Paddock threw out his chest in position of attention even stiffer than before.

"Sir," cried Paddock, eyes glistening with emotion, turban collapsing and falling from the same cause, "Sir, there's people in the villages puts names to you no common, ignorant working man should put to a gentleman, never mind what he drinks, sir. Sir, when I was in the Army, in the officers' mess, sir, I've seen gentlemen on guest nights —. Sir, a better, kinder gentleman ——"

"Chuck it," said Banjo, and closed the door upon him and stepped back to Dawn in the kitchen.

"But, Banjo, that is very nice of you," she greeted him.

"Tush; who's got the money pays the bills. Isn't that the rule? I have not too much, but I reckon a fiver slips

easier out of me than out of the Paddock or the Pasture. It was cheap at a fiver, anyway, that exhibition."

"I should say it was!" she laughed. They were back in the sitting room again. "Even that last part in the scullery there! I wouldn't have missed him in that turban and that half-egged moustache, one up, one down, for worlds!" and she laughed again.

As before, Paddock had cleared a situation, dissolving it in healthy laughter.

"Well, I must go," she announced. "No, I have tried the brush. The mud is wet; better to let it dry as I walk home. It has been jolly this, seeing where you live. I love it. But, Banjo, tell me, *why* do you live here?"

He shrugged. "A man must have a roof."

"Yes, but why a roof here?"

He went to a cupboard and took out a brass tablet and held it towards her. It was very dingy but she could read it.

"What, you are a doctor?"

He nodded, smiling. "Precisely how coming here happened, was that I came quite by chance, never realising that it was my brother's part of the world, to do a *locum* for a pal of mine at Kington Berger — Tom Creek, a rare little chap, you will meet him — and saw this place for sale while I was running round. It suited the life I wanted to lead, and I thought I would shove a plate up and vary the life by looking at a few tongues and punching a few ribs now and then. I settled in and I decided not to vary the life. Wherefore the gate bare; the plate——" he tossed it whence he had taken it — "in the cupboard."

"Banjo," she replied to this statement, "I think I must have a serious talk with you one day. But that explains heaps of things," she went on smilingly. "Pelham never told me a word of this, of your being a doctor."

"For the serious talk," Banjo told her, "my consulting room is always at your disposal. As to your not hearing from Pelham of my hard-earned degree I would say, speaking professionally, that your ears are not long enough."

She was at the door in process of taking her leave. "My ears?"

"Why, you want mighty long ears," he said, "to hear Pelham say anything to my credit," and at that they both laughed and she was at the gate for good-bye.

"But he has not had much opportunity," she told him. "He does not know that I have met you."

Banjo opened his eyes. "You have not told him?"

She shook her head. "It happens that I have not."

He said gravely, "It happens that you should. Half-sister-in-law, I told you when we met this morning a word in season; and how good it was; you said so yourself. Hear a second, half-sister-in-law. Tell Pelham."

She looked at him. "Yes, I will do that," she said. She put out her hand. "Good-bye, Banjo."

He took her hand and retained it. "Hear a third," he said. "That serious talk you think you had better give me. Better not."

She looked into his eyes, saw there again the thoughts as dimly moving figures, not to be discerned; and she withdrew her hand and left him.

He came back into his room and stood before the portraits, the quotation written above them, which he had pinned there a month before. They had escaped her notice; they held for many moments his profound attention. His face twitched. With a quick gesture he put forward his hands and ripped away the picture that was Pelham's and cast it from him. On the other he looked steadily and a long while. "And night," he then said aloud, "the hunter, followed fast."

"No, by God!" he said violently. "No!" and he snatched down the portrait, tore it across and twice across again and took it to the fire and dropped it there.

The fingers of one hand he placed upon the high mantle-shelf. He rested his forehead on the knuckles, and, thus bowed, watched the flame in which the picture was consumed.

In Dawn's own face flame also, and within the hour, leapt suddenly. She did not see Pelham again till luncheon and at the luncheon table. While the servants were in the room he spoke no word at all, no response even to the remark or two she made. There was nothing in that. Frequently, coming straight to the table from his business matters, he would sit thus preoccupied for many minutes. But immediately the door had closed behind Jessop he raised his eyes to hers and put them steadily upon her.

There was something in that. Colour tinged her face.

He said, "Why did you not tell me that you had met my brother?"

The flame ran up. Conscious of it, she spoke out of it the entire truth. "Pelham, because I thought it would annoy you."

"You were right. Let me tell you, though, that it annoys me in degree infinitely greater to have to wait to be told it by an outsider."

"It was stupid of me. I am sorry. Who told you?"

"Miss Pasture."

Silence.

Presently he lifted his eyes upon her again. "How did this come about, this meeting?"

"He passed me a few days ago in the road. He stopped me and introduced himself."

"He was taking, and he knew he was taking, and you knew that he was taking, a monstrous liberty."

"Pelham — *I* knew? How was I to know?"

"Why were you afraid to tell me?"

Again the silence.

He played with food in pretence of eating; her plate remained untouched; then he spoke. "Well, he has dared to take this liberty. The thing is done. You did not know it was a liberty. You are sorry. That also is done. Let it be understood that the incident is now as it had never happened. When next you see him you do not know him."

She did not reply.

Again silence, but this time hers to break it. "Did Miss Pasture come up here, to the house?"

"She did. She came up, actually, to see Mrs. Omeroyd about the egg supply."

"Funny she did not tell me."

"You were perhaps too occupied."

She let another minute go. "Pelham, who *is* this Miss Pasture?"

"She is an admirable woman, devoted to her mother, robbed by a scoundrel brother of hers. When my wards, who were your bridesmaids, were here with me four years, she acted as housekeeper and companion to them; that is to say, she spent all day here, returning to her mother in the evening. An admirable woman; I think I do not know a woman of more estimable qualities."

"Did you know she was at our wedding?"

His tone, in his eulogy of Miss Pasture, not devoid of the iron note it had had throughout these proceedings, held with it nevertheless a something warmer quality, rather as if a moral was in Miss Pasture for her to draw. With her question he returned to his staccato utterance.

"She was not."

"She certainly was."

"She was not invited."

"Then she came uninvited. I saw her."

He shrugged. "It may be so."

"She gave me the most extraordinary look."

"Absurd."

He got up. "You may tell Jessop to bring me a cutlet to my study, that I am busy in there." He went to the door and at the door turned and spoke: "I may take it that I am definitely understood in this matter of my half-brother, that when next you see him you do not know him?"

If he had been at the table, looking at her with that look, she must have acquiesced or by silence have given acquiescence. The space between them helped her towards a naturalness in expression of her feelings. "But, Pelham, your own half-brother! Really, is that your wish?"

"No, it is my instruction."

She was left alone. The key, with that word "instruction", had turned.

CHAPTER X

THE VICARAGE

THE QUESTS entered into occupation of Ashton Parva vicarage on the pouring wet evening that had succeeded a pouring wet December day — five Quests: Roddy Quest, Philippa Quest, Jumbo Quest and David Quest, who was two Quests.

Two men had habitation in the breast of the new vicar of Ashton Parva: one was that sanguine, buoyant he that had been presented to Mr. Custom as, elevated by the thoughts of his first vicariate, he had spoken enthusiastically of all that his new dignity meant to him; the other was that spirit, prone to waves of misgiving of himself and, beneath them, to brood sometimes troubled, oppressed, over whose brow had passed that quick contraction at Mr. Custom's inconsequent remark, "It is rather a remote little place, Ashton Parva."

It was this second Quest who had arrived at the vicarage this streaming wet December evening and who crouched now, eight of the clock, before the fire in the sitting room which four times had refused to light and which flickered sulkily now with the expression that, if it was refused leave to go out, at least it refused absolutely to give heat.

A day of disasters; a chapter, unrelieved, of accidents; a beginning of evilest omen!

Roddy was upstairs putting the children to bed. To what had he brought Roddy? To what had he brought the children? Into what, not blindly, but with open eyes, had he launched himself?

Every prospect of rain, soon to be fulfilled, had hung, grey and forbidding, in the dark morning on which, twelve hours before, the start had been made ready. It was Monday. At the scrambled breakfast — the children wildly excited; Roddy, as ever, the soul of sunshine and of courage; himself, now that the hour was come and come thus blackly, nervy, apprehensive — arrived a letter from Admiral Bratton. He had opened it eagerly. Admiral Bratton! Everything depended on Admiral Bratton! Even to see his handwriting on the envelope was to feel his jolly hand, to hear his cheery voice.

But the letter, which should have been delivered on Saturday, was to say that, to his infinite regret, the Admiral would not be there to see that everything was bright for them and to welcome them. He had unexpectedly been called away over the week-end. Back on Tuesday — " and that is positive. There's a meet on Tuesday. Never miss a meet even if I do have to let myself miss a parson! "

Bad! And he had put down the letter with the word " Bad! "

" Well, but, my dearest," Roddy cried. " Whatever difference can it possibly make? Jolly if he had been there, of course, but jollier still to have the old Admiral come stumping in to-morrow, when we shall have got all our furniture pushed about and looking ripping. You see he says he has had the coal sent in and the place all cleaned, just as he promised, and that this woman Mrs. — Mrs. — what is the word — Mrs. Glumday, will be in first thing to light all the fires and keep them lit and have a kettle on. Jolly! Imagine it! "

Impossible not to respond to that dear sunshine, and a droll grin therefore with his expression of his mood. " Ten to one she forgets."

Roddy laughed happily. " Oh, David, how can you!

Dearest, do help Phil to hack up that loaf for sandwiches while I struggle with the emergency bag."

However, if his bet, as he was to know, had been that Mrs. Glumday had already firmly confused the Monday of the vicar's arrival with the Tuesday of the Admiral's return, and was not that day setting foot near the vicarage, he would have won his wager.

Then the journey.

Ashton Parva was fifty miles by road from Shadpool. The arrangement had been that the motor van of a Laversham contractor was coming over to take their furniture, arriving at ten, and that they were to see it off, then themselves take train at twelve o'clock; a long, roundabout journey, involving wait at the junction to which a local line took them from Shadpool; arriving, if all went well, just about the same time as their goods.

All went ill.

The van had missed the road and was desperately late in arriving. They had at last to leave it, unable to superintend the final clearing up and stowing in, and rain now falling, and dash to the station. No need to have dashed. No train. A breakdown on the local line, passenger train fouled some goods trucks, no one hurt but a good three hours yet before the line would be cleared, if then.

When they returned to the bare and desolated rooms, the van had gone; when they returned, in pitiless rain, to the station, chances of clearance in three hours were definitely gone. Roddy, with the children went to the house of a friend; David, by now infinitely depressed, waited, trailing about, damp, cold, utterly dejected, till nearly three; and then, " Perhaps the five o'clock might be got away — doubtful."

A car must be taken. He went to a garage whose proprietor he knew. " Ashton Parva? Twelve miles this side

of Laversham? Six pound — five to you, Mr. Quest."

Five pounds was to David Quest as fifty or a hundred to a man of even indifferent means. Oddments of floor-cloths and fittings had had to be ordered for the vicarage; there was the heavy cost of the removal. Another five pounds! But the car must be taken.

Bad! Bad!

Then the arrival; six o'clock; pitch black; desolating rain; empty, freezing house, smelling of damp; furniture to be lugged through the rain and dumped by light of candles from Roddy's emergency bag stuck anywhere that, by melting the ends, they would stick.

What a beginning!

He huddled nearer to the sullen fire and from the desolation of this beginning prospected fearfully into the future looming now beyond it. Two hundred a year — less than he had drawn as curate at Shadpool, though there with the unfurnished rooms to pay for, here house free, but rates, taxes, and upkeep. Living was "cheaper in the country", but was it? In Shadpool Roddy's daily marketing had pick and choice among the dozen and more closely competitive shops catering for an industrial community where every uttermost farthing failed not to buy its uttermost ounce. Isolated, here was no such choice. Similarly with the children's clothes, their shoe leather especially, and Roddy's own and his — though, boots excepted, he had bought nothing for himself for years. Similarly with the children's education: at Shadpool the cheap and excellent public school for girls had offered; Philippa already there, Jumbo to start in a term or so; — here? On balance, reckoning out these things when first the offer was made to him, he had seen himself incontestably much worse off and the proposition

financially out of the question. But the Admiral! The Admiral was making his clear income up to £300 a year; the Admiral was solving the education difficulty by getting a widowed sister and two little nieces to live with him and a governess for them, whose services Phil and Jumbo were to share, free; the Admiral was wiping out the greengrocer's bill by sending all vegetables and fruit from the Manor garden; the Admiral was writing off big item of the grocer's bill with eggs from the Manor hencoops and a chicken so often, "that you will grow to hate the sight of them, my dear chap!" Yes, at every turn the Admiral, and all rosy (viewed from Shadpool) because of the Admiral. Here? Viewed here, in this damp and chilly room; in hearing of that melancholy, sheeting rain; in unexpected absence of the Admiral — ? Suppose anything happened to the Admiral?

He writhed in his chair.

He was not thinking of himself. He was thinking of the children, of Philippa, of Jumbo, of the small son coming in the spring (always as a boy the baby expected in May was spoken of), and of Roddy. He was responsible for them. He stood to them, absolutely and entirely, in every breath of life they drew, as the sun stands to mankind, essential, urgent, imperative, prerequisite for every condition of life upon which mankind depends. What had he done to them? To what brought them? To what risk exposed them?

For what?

Yes, it was for himself, not for them (his fears, twisting in upon him, turned now to accuse him) that he had thought when he had accepted this chance, taken this risk. A great name in the Church! Here! This dark and chilly room, that ceaseless dirge of rain! Contrast the bright electric gleaming of the despised Shadpool apartments; contrast the sounds without of busy city life,

of roaring trams, of hooting cars, of footsteps, voices! A great name in the Church! What name was here? Again the Admiral — the Admiral with the Bishop's friendship and good will and promises! Again the doubt, not heretofore imagined — suppose anything happened to the Bishop, other and more immediate claims upon his benefices; translation to another See; death? Why had not he thought of all that? What had he done?

He crouched lower.

Roddy came in.

"Oh, my dearest, such fun! The lion cubs are caged at last. They never have had such a day. 'When will it be morning?' if you please, they are asking — just crazy, *crazy* to be up and out exploring in the garden!"

He puts out a hand to her; his only response; no word.

She knows, and sees anew, the depths that he is in. "There is one *jolly* good thing —" she goes on, dropping on her knees by his side, squatting on her heels and taking in both her own the hand extended to her. "Oh, my dear, but aren't you cold! Let me rub these ice-block hands. One *jolly* good thing about having hardly any furniture, that it doesn't take two minutes to arrange it. When my mother and all of us moved to the Sussex place from London, we were two solid weeks arranging the house; not living in it, mind you, but staying at an hotel in Tunbridge Wells and motoring over every day; and even then had already left behind enough stuff to furnish the flat! Here, we arrive practically *in* the furniture van, lift each thing straight to where it must obviously go ——"

"Roddy," says he, withdrawing his hands and placing his head in them, elbows on his knees, "Roddy, how changed your life is!"

She kneels up and puts her arms about those shoulders, bowed down in that despondency. "My dear, how changed indeed! When I recall that futile then, and when I see this perfect now! Lift each thing, as I was saying, straight from the van to its place, and there we are ready for the night, as if we had been here years. Oh, perfect, I call it!"

He inquires dully: "Were the mattresses very wet?"

"Oh, scarcely a bit! They will dry in no time when I manage to get that kitchen range going to-morrow. Ours was perfectly all right, so I put the chicks together in our bed — we can fix up on blankets — and they are pretending they are in the elephant house at the Zoo, Jumbo trumpeting and Philippa pretending to be the keeper with a bad headache. Larks!"

He does not smile. "Fancy that fool putting the mattresses just where he must have known they would catch the rain!" He turns to her with a sudden movement. "Roddy, what a chapter of disasters the whole move has been from start to finish!"

She takes his hands. "My dear, how you will laugh at them to-morrow!"

"Roddy, I am full of fears to-night."

She put her hands up to his face. "My dear, my dear, why should you be?"

He holds her hands a moment to his lips. "Of having brought you here, you and the children, to risks, and chances, too, to remoteness such as this. Roddy, it looked all right, it looked peaceful and jolly after the noise and pavements and chimney stacks of Shadpool every time we came to see it; it was always a fine day, always sunny, when we came; the Admiral always here, everything always so certain and assured. To-night! — All those mishaps of the journey, this sheeting rain, that dead village showing not a single light, this reeking damp and dark-

ness here when we arrived and opened the door. Roddy, it looked all right, it looked a famous chance, in prospect; now ——"

Her warm young voice warmly fills up the blank his voice has left. "My dear, my dear, what *fancies!* David, in the morning, when the sun is blazing, and we are airing the place, and you are getting out your books, and the children are having the time of their lives in a huge garden of our very own, you will simply love the place. And, David, when you hear all the people calling you vicar! Just think of all the fun we have had since you accepted and you began calling yourself 'vicar' in every sentence you spoke to us, 'The vicar wants this', and 'The vicar wants that', and 'Will the vicar have some more bread?' and 'Shall the vicar put his boots on?' Oh, my dear, it is going to be marvellous!"

He holds her hands.

"My dearest," she goes on, "and all that is no more than the jolly side of it. Think of the deeper side. You said just now that my life had changed. Yes, think upon how often I have told you how it has; how, when I was living those idle, empty days at home, I got to asking myself what on earth I was getting out of it all, and then to imagining that I saw a great question mark, a note of interrogation, hanging in the air whenever I thought about it; and then fell in with Father Absolute; and working down there knew radiant, day-long happiness, and could not understand why until Father Absolute one day told me. 'You do not love the life down here because, as you say, you are living for it,' he told me; 'You love it because you are living *by* it;' and when I said 'Yes, explain, Father?' 'You are living by it,' he said, 'because when you are here you are giving; and because life, real life, *living,* is giving. When you are taking, only taking, you are not living, you are slowly dying.' And

I said, ' Giving? Money? Material things? ' And he said, ' My child, self, spiritual things.' "

David's voice: " Tell on, Roddy, I see the drift of this."

Her voice: " Do you remember how he asked me then what I had seen in life until I came to work down there; and how I told you that, puzzled exactly what to say, I said, ' Seen? Father, I believe I have seen just a big question mark; ' and David, his reply: ' My child, see a cross.' "

" Tell on, Roddy, I have need of this."

" David, you say that you are full of fears, of doubts. Oh, my dear, remember the dark and doubting days at Shadpool when you had been there ages, as it seemed, and thought you had done nothing and never would do anything! Remember those Lunch Hour services of yours, daily, and every day such crowds of men that when I now and then could come I never could get in until some man had recognised me and had a way made for ' the bloke's missus.' How proud I was the first day I heard that ' the bloke's missus '! — David, just think! When first we went to Shadpool you had to take up the Sunday evening service for men, and not above a dozen ever there; and then you changed it down to the old tin drill-hall in the factory quarter and had it midweek as well as Sunday, and more and more and more began to come; and then started the Lunch Hour service every day and said the men could bring their pipes, and look what crowds! Oh, don't you remember that old timekeeper at Burton's works who said to me, ' Pouring in like as if they was coming to a something football match; apologising for my manner of speech,' he said."

He laughs; and yet, not mirth, emotion, is in his short laugh's sound. It is a sound connate with his, " Tell on, Roddy, I have need of this; " and she goes on: " Look

how they learnt to come to you with all their troubles and their arguments! Oh, just remember that one who came to you that night to work out for him what it would cost him to hit a policeman, and how you worked it out on paper and kept a moneybox on our mantelpiece for him to save up his drink money for it, and how in the end he found it was the drink he had laid out instead of the policeman and bought a gramophone instead. Oh, David, what wonders you did there!"

He says deeply, "Roddy, the sermon you can preach!"

"David, you are the sermon; the sermon is your life. Oh, my dear, my dear, when you look back and see what you have done with your life, look on and see what you yet will do with it. David, before coming here, you prayed for guidance; if there was *one* here, only *one* that you could help, you were ready, you said, to come — and, guided, now have come. This place, these people, that have not had a priest for months and months, and for years before only that poor old man, long past his work! David ——"

He folds her to him. "Roddy, God forgive me, I had forgotten; that old, evil forgetting of mine. 'A great name in the Church' I have been thinking; 'A great name *for* the Church,' help me, Roddy, to remember. Yes, sent, if to help only one! Yes, work; my own work, my own people, my own parish!" He gets up. "Imagine me sitting here, brooding things! Let us do things, Roddy, before bedtime. What shall we do first?"

She also up and hugely glad. "Let us get out your dear books!"

"Great! Roddy, you have preached your sermon; pray on your sermon, Roddy, now, before we start to-night and for my start to-morrow;" and thus, within the ill-lit chilly room, above the dirging rain, beside the cheer-

less fire, her voice: " . . . This Thy servant that for Thy service has been sent down here by Thee . . . strengthen . . . support . . . illumine. I, his wife . . . helpmate . . . comrade. He and I . . . and not afraid with any amazement."

His voice: " Amen."

Nevertheless it is upon a note that strikes back — absurdly as he knows, yet chill and deeply as he feels — into his earlier apprehensions that the evening, his first at Ashton Parva, ends.

Roddy had gone up. He had been alone again some twenty minutes, and, alone, wandering about the chill, cavernous rooms, had offered himself again the prey of his misgivings. He was at the foot of the stairs, candle in hand, about to follow her, when there sounded upon the front door a single knock, enormous in its sudden bursting through the silence, portentous, ominous, in its sudden crash upon his nerves.

Shaken, he went back along the passage and opened the door, and peered, shielding the candle with his hand, at who was there.

A gaunt, forlorn looking countryman was there, smelling, it seemed to David, strongly of earth; or was that earthy smell exuded by the saturated garden, the soaking blackness of the night? He showed a weedy grey beard. He seemed somehow to David to be dressed in weedy, tattered greyness, and earth.

He spoke. " I thought, as seein' your light, as I would give a knock in passin', sir," he said, his voice extraordinarily dolorous, as though he were announcing that, having knocked, he proposed to pass along and die. " I never seed you, sir, when you come down along with the Admiral back along, being laid up with the rumbles, sir."

"With what?"

For the life of him David could not help it that his voice was sharp, impatient almost. This was a parishioner, the first met since arrival, and he should be warmly genial to him; but he had been oppressed with the events of the day, startled by the knock, felt himself confirmed somehow in his disquiet by this weedy apparition mumbling here, personification as it might be of the dead loneliness of the place. "With what?"

"With the rumbles, sir," said the apparition sadly, no way disturbed by the sharpness of the inquiry. "Rumbles in the stomach cruel. The Admiral, he sent me down a drop of whiskey, not being a brandy man, as you might say, but whiskey don't soothe up the rumbles not like brandy, sir. There was a man back here to Great Gallop ten or twelve years ago had a cow ——"

"Yes, well — well, thank you for calling. We are only just in. I am ——"

"Yes, I see you was, sir. I see your light as I come along so I thought as how I would just come in and tell you, sir."

He stopped. Surely to goodness he could not have called to tell about his rumbles? "To tell me what?"

"As I'm the sextant, sir."

"Sextant? Oh, I see, yes, the sexton. I am very glad ——"

"Yes, sextant, sir. I can ——"

David made an effort to be genial and in geniality to escape. "Well, let us hope there will be as little call for your services as possible, eh? That's the way, eh? What is your name?"

"Drizzle, sir. No, there ain't not much call for me hereabouts, sir, and that's a pity too, for I can dig a nice grave, I can, sir."

Ghoul!

" Yes, well, I am glad they are all so healthy round about. That is good, eh? Good night, Drizzle."

" Yes, there ain't much call for my job o' work, sir; that's why when new folks come, as it might be the Admiral back along, and now you and your party, I always like to wonder if perhaps it means a job of work for me coming, sir —— "

He stopped and peered over David's shoulder into the hall, and David turned with him to look. Roddy, unheard by him, was coming down the stairs, candle in hand. It startled him. She looked extraordinarily pale, fagged, he thought.

" Ah, that your good lady, sir," said Mr. Drizzle. " Yes, I can dig a nice grave, sir."

" Good night," said David, and shut the door upon him.

CHAPTER XI

CLAIMS STAKED: A CLAIM VACATED

MORNING, expunging night, dissolved with it the gloom the night had held. "In the morning when the sun is blazing" when, not if — David had been assured by Roddy; and Roddy's prophecy was right. The sun no sooner was up than it showed itself strong and dazzling in a sky almost clear. "And we are airing the place," Roddy had continued, "and you are getting out your books, and the children are having the time of their lives in a huge garden of our very own, you will simply love the place;" and she was right again, in every particular. David no sooner saw the promise of the day than he was whistling about the place, whistling more cheerily than ever, as he set to rights the room that was to be the vicar's study (the vicar's!); Philippa and Jumbo no sooner were permitted out than they were ranging the glorious wilderness that was the garden, shouting with excitement, calling, chasing; Roddy no sooner had put match to fires which overnight had stood adamant to every coaxing than they flamed, crackled, roared with that exhilarating sound which, coupled with the sizzling of bacon in the frying pan, is, declared the vicar, rubbing his hands, the finest music that ever art of man composed.

"Talking of which, Rodds," added David, "what am I going to say to this Miss Pasture when I see her, probably to-day, about this organ business?"

Roddy turned from pan with rasher on a fork. "You

are going to tell her, of course, that your wife would not dream of taking her place; at most will be delighted — yes, put it that way, David — to be her second string and to play the organ whenever, for any reason, she feels disinclined to."

"And shall I add," said David, speaking ruefully, "that, though the vicar's wife would not dream of it, the vicar, ever since he saw himself vicar, has dreamed of nothing so fondly as his own wife playing his own organ in his own church? It is a sickener, Roddy. I am going to make a fight, a tactful fight, for it."

Roddy replaced the rasher. "David, please do not. I am only sorry the Admiral ever mentioned to Miss Pasture that I could play. If she offers to hand it over to me, and seems really genuine and nice about it, of course that is another matter. But unless she gives a lead, don't, whatever you do, be even what you call tactful. I know your tactful! The last thing in the world we want to do is to put any one's nose out of joint."

"Well, it would be a nasty operation in her case," agreed David, still rueful, but much disposed to vent the sunny side of things on this glad morning, "and that's a fact. She has got a mighty big nose what I saw of it."

Roddy laughed, then lifted the pan. "I have *never* cooked rashers so well," she declared. "The last Shadpool rashers we ever shall eat, and, dear things, I believe they know it and have done themselves like this on purpose. Collect the children, David — Mercy, what a knock!"

Sound as of a cannon ball hurled against the back door was cause of her exclamation; and David, bade to investigate, gave as his opinion that his visitor of the night

before was its hurler. "My friend Drizzle, for sure. I know his fairy touch."

Even his recollection of that "I can dig a nice grave" seemed only comic now, in all this brightness of the morning; and he stepped briskly to the door to find the earthy sextant; but it was Roddy's "Probably the missing Mrs. Glumday", called after him, that proved correct.

Mrs. Glumday, who was lean and long, and who wore what appeared to be a brown dressing gown enveloping her from neck to heels and bound very tightly about the waist by a considerable length of clothesline, presented as the most striking feature of her face lips so tightly pursed as to give the impression either that she was under the disagreeable necessity of going through life holding in her mouth something which she dared neither swallow nor reject, or (and this was the fact) that she was only waiting, and would burst if she had to wait long, for you to finish speaking before she spoke.

She burst now. "Well, if ever I took glad to see a mortal body 'tis you, sir, and if it was a coffin opening I'd say the same. Acoming down that there road" — she stepped back and indicated the road — "I seed smoke coming out of that there chimbley stack there" — she indicated the chimneys — "an' me heart came up into me mouth like I could feel a hole in me chest where it had come from. 'Why, good gracious alive,' I says to myself, 'if that there smoke ain't been lit by mortal hands, and they not coming in till to-day, as the Admiral told me out of his own mouth, and the very key in me pocket an' all, why, goodness gracious me,' I says to myself, 'if it ain't that it's arsenic,' I says, 'the same——'"

"Arsenic?" questioned David, forcing in his first word.

"The same as they do to the haystacks," continued Mrs. Glumday, checked, but not losing her stride. "'For there ain't smoke without a fire,' I says to myself, in two minds whether to come on or go back for the constable, who I see shavin' at his window as I come along, being Toosday, the day the Inspector over to Laversham comes out to him, 'and there ain't fire without a lucifer been struck deliberate and put to it,' I says. Ah, and there's many a man been in two minds, mind you, sir, as has found hisself in six through not taking one or the other sharp while he could; which I . . ."

"Roddy," called David, turning away and backing up the passage lest he should founder utterly in this deluge. "Roddy, I think you had better come here a moment, will you?"

Mrs. Glumday, cut off as it were at the main, drew a deep breath, pursed her lips upon it so that her cheeks seemed to be cracking, and bouncing determinedly over the threshold, untied her clothesline and proceeded to release herself from it by the singular process of holding one end and revolving away towards the other rather as if she were a top and were spinning herself.

"For goodness' sake!" exclaimed David, escaping into the kitchen to Roddy, coming towards him and, at her instruction, passing on through the house into the garden to find the children, and for his own part, there to release his laughter.

He laughed aloud, not only at Mrs. Glumday, but for sheer happiness in the day. What fun all this was going to be! How grotesque, in this sunshine and in this mood, seemed those misgivings of last night! And

there approached him up his drive (his own drive!) at that moment a man whom he recognised as groom at the Manor with message that added assurance to his contentment, gladness to his joy; the Admiral had telephoned through to say that he was arriving at ten and would look in on his way to the meet.

The Admiral! Great! He moved about, calling the children; and as their happy voices came to him, his thoughts ran ardently to the time when with those most dear voices would be mingled that of the small son for whom, ever since marriage, he had longed. May, only the coming May, would be Roddy's time; and he was so certain in himself that a son would be delivered to him that he had the feeling that, by some mysterious manifestation, the life that Roddy carried in her was making known to him his longing would be gratified.

My son! My little girls! My wife! My parish!

Oh, happiest of men!

The interview with Miss Pasture, expected shortly and occurring before midday, though not in itself on happiest plane, had in it promise of happiest endeavour; and by lunch time he had had to add to it two jolliest meetings to recount again to Roddy at the meal — with the Admiral and with " that chap that Jumbo here palled up with, Banjo Heritage, the nicest fellow, Roddy. I took to him a heap."

He had been in the lane outside the vicarage garden, prospecting from that viewpoint the wilderness of shrubs which, untouched for years, made small, dense forests along the soggy stubble which once had been lawns and soon should be lawns again (what fun, working in his

own garden!) when the Admiral, true to his word, had come jogging down on his way to the meet. In his hunting kit, with his jovial shout as he saw David, with his genial smile and kindliest words as he drew near, what vivid, jolly, substantial, assuring figure he looked! Watching him approach, David had the thought that if, in his gloomy brooding of the previous evening he could have glanced up to see that sight, how utterly those fogs of doubt would have been dissipated, how warm and glowing every prospect would have stood revealed!

The Admiral, in shining pink, in whitest breeches, whitest gloves and whitest stock, in glossy hat and gleaming boots and glinting spurs, astride a 16:2 chestnut gelding that seemed, by its behaviour, to be dancing on hot bricks, achieved as near to stationary position as his mount could be persuaded, and stretching down one of the white hands held David's firm and long. "Hulloa, Vicar! Ah, that's the word, eh? No more Quest! Hulloa, Vicar; hulloa, hulloa, hulloa! What a glorious morning, eh? Whoa, horse! Stand, will you! Stand, damnation take you! What a morning, Vicar! What a welcome for you! We haven't had a day like this this season! Gad, I was damnably sorry, though, I couldn't be here last night to greet you! Found everything all right, did you? That woman got the place all right and shining for you, eh? I wish to God — to goodness, sorry, Vicar; ha, ha, ha! — I wish to goodness I could pop in and have a peep at you all, but one thing I'm mighty late as it is, and another if I once get off this brute I'll never get on again. Took two men and a boy and the gardener to get me up. They've filled him with oats right up to the bridle and he's fit to jump out of his skin. Yes, he's a beauty, isn't he? My latest.

First time I've had him out. *Stand,* will you! *Stand,* damn you sire and dam and all your family! Tell you what, though, Vicar, you've never got to admire a man's horse now you've come into a hunting country. 'Tain't done. All you do is to look at it as if you'd price it at about fourpence a bag, and most you ever say is, 'Looks well this morning' in a tone as if up to then you'd never seen it look better than fit to draw a milk cart. Ha, ha, ha! Teach you some hunting etiquette, now we've got you, Vicar. Have you out too, by Gad, we will. I'll fit you up. Whoa, horse, *whoa!* Must go, Vicar, 'pon my soul I shall be over the hedge, if I keep this bag of fireworks waiting much longer. Look here, I got a heap of messages for you to give your missus. You all got to come up to tea this afternoon, that's one. 'Nother is, it's quite all right and all fixed about my sister coming to me with her two kids to be companions to yours and to school together. She will be here by Christmas and you'll all come up to us for the day, after a ripping little 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing' service and all that, and we'll have the most roaring old Christmas that ever was, eh? By Gad, we will. 'Nother was, what was it? Oh yes, 'nother thing is, I've been worrying about your missus only goin' to keep a daily woman to come in. Don't like that, damned if I do. My housekeeper will fix up a maid to live in somehow; leave it to me; send you down one of our own girls for a start. Leave it to me. Leave everything to me, my boy. You've come here to please me and I'm going to lay myself out to please you. You watch. Stand, horse! He won't. No good; I'm off — shall be damn soon if I'm not, anyway. Ha, ha, ha!"

Warmed as if standing before a blazing fire, heartened as the Admiral himself will be when he gets out-

side the bottle of champagne that always is served to him on a hunting night, confident in his future as Jim Peel, who hunts hounds that day, on his horse, happy as the happiest of those now assembling at the meet, David has effected no more than interjections into all this jolly song; and, thus warmed, assured and happy, has not so much as hinted at the mishaps, the miscarriages, and the misgivings of the day before. How think of them, much less voice them? Here, with this genial, generous spirit, all such are as if unhappened.

"Yes," cries the genial, generous spirit, confirming his last words as he relaxes last efforts to keep the bag of fireworks still, "You bet your life, Vicar, you have landed with both feet where you're going to be looked after. Long as I'm in the saddle, Vicar — Whoa! Hell! Damn near out of it then! — You'll have oats to your feed every ——"

The horse makes a bound, the Admiral lets him go. "Good-bye, good-bye! Tea to-night, remember, and stay to dinner, eh? Yes, fix that! Good-bye, good-bye!" He tries to turn to wave but finds himself too occupied in front. Away around the corner, crop high in air at last salute, "Good-bye, good-bye!"

The vicar feels the gladdest man in England.

Then Miss Pasture, by whom the vicar is made no less glad — she offers, indeed, on this his very first morning, a prospect of what waits him here to do in this his very own parish — though given for a little while the slightly uncomfortable feeling that one gets from hearing things that one feels, while hearing them, ought not to be confided on so brief an acquaintance. "I hardly knew where to look," he told Roddy, after she had gone; "while she was pouring out all this about this

unfortunate brother of hers. Look at her, on my soul I could not. I think I have never seen such bitterness in a person's eyes. Talk about sins of the spirit! Poor soul, I felt sorry for her, cherishing such hate against another, a brother especially, and sorry for all the wrecked life he seems to have caused her; but really, it was rather horrible having to listen to such intimacies from a neighbour I had not had half a dozen words with."

"David, you will have to lay yourself out to bring something happier to her."

"Planning that already, Roddy," says the vicar, ardent-eyed in prospect. "My first chance clear already. My first claim staked!"

"David, how splendid! How did she get on to the subject of her brother?"

"Why, straight from this unfortunate business about the organ. I was just beginning to tell you when that Glumday woman came plunging in and interrupted us. *What* was it she called suet dumplings?"

Roddy laughed delightedly. "Cloggers. She says they clog the system. Oh, she is a perpetual joy, David. She is for ever bringing out extraordinary maxims of her own invention that throw me into fits. When I was asking her if we could get fish here, she said she never touched fish because of the bones, and when I said that seemed rather foolish, 'Ah, there's many a man,' she said, 'died of a sardine bone in his throat that might ha' ate a whale and never found one'; and when she saw me airing the mattresses and I told her they only got a bit sprinkled coming over last night, 'Ah, there's many a man caught his death of a squirt from the tap,' she said; 'might a' stood under a waterful and never took a cough on his chest.' Things like that. She is full of them. An utter joy. But tell me about Miss Pasture."

"Why, I answered the door to her," David said, the Glumday aphorisms having been enjoyed to the full. "You were in the kitchen, so didn't hear; you know there is not a bell in the house that rings? Every wire broken. She would not come in, would not hear of it, though I told her how sorry you would be to miss her. Oh, no — very distinctly stiff in her manner — knew you must be busy; would pay a call on you next week; had only taken the earliest opportunity, being in the village and hearing we had arrived, to tell me that of course as my wife played the organ she had no intention of continuing in the post she had held for nineteen years. That was the way she put it, 'post I have held for nineteen years', and I thought it was not the most tactful way. However, I was ready with my tact, as I told you I would be, so, 'Nineteen years!' I exclaimed, 'My dear Miss Pasture, if it had been nineteen months I would not hear of your being superseded, and if it was only nineteen days my wife would sooner chop her fingers off than take your place. When it comes to nineteen years, my goodness,' I said, 'I wouldn't let Handel himself play a single hymn there, not if he came out of his grave and begged me on his bended knees!' Tact, eh?"

"Pretty good!" laughed Roddy. "And it was then that she agreed to continue, eh?"

"Not by chalks. She never relaxed a muscle of her stony stare all through that impassioned bit of tact of mine. If I had not been so keen to do the friendly thing, I would have let her go hang there and then and jumped for joy at securing to myself what you know I have wanted as much as anything — my Roddy playing my organ in my church. But I stuck to her to win her ——"

"David," said Roddy, who knew indeed how fondly this desire had been his, and hers, "it was very dear of you."

"Oh, my dear, you would have done the same, only better. No, so I piled on then about how she must on no account desert me just when I had come down to pull the church together; and I told her how I was going to start a choir and how the Admiral was going to fit it out with surplices, special surplices for the Festival days and all; and how I was relying absolutely on her to hunt up the boys for me and to train the singing; and it was that, Roddy, precisely, that let me in for all that horribly uncomfortable stuff about that brother of hers. 'For I am sure, Miss Pasture,' I said, 'that the singing is just as much in your line as the playing.'

"Roddy, 'I imagine that it is' was her reply, said as cold and stiff as a frozen poker. Really her manner all the time, up to then, was as if she had an immense opinion of herself and none at all of me, as if she resented my coming into the village and wasn't worrying not to show it. 'I imagine it is,' she said. 'I studied singing under' — two alarming names I could not catch — 'I was to have sung in Opera.' I said how interesting that was. 'Yes, but my career was ruined just as it was about to begin,' she went on; and I didn't know what on earth to say to that; and shouldn't, as it turned out, have had opportunity if I had known; because then and immediately she let fly about this brother, her whole history, her whole tragedy, just as I have told you, and it *is* a tragedy, though I do wish — however, that is going to be my first chance down here, and yours, Roddy, to pal up with her and strike a light for her, as Father Absolute would say, where it is mighty dark for her at present. Roddy, one claim staked already, and not had our first lunch in the place yet! Pretty good, eh?"

"*Jolly* good," Roddy agreed, lovingly happy in his ardour. "And then afterwards she agreed, eh?"

"Yes, I got her back, after she had spent herself on

her brother, to the surplices and sung psalms and chanted responses and things, and she agreed. Only said, 'Very well, I will continue then, since it is your wish. Good morning'; which was not *over* cordial; but I have got out the matches and the box for her. I shall strike that light; I have got that claim pegged. You watch, Roddy. Jolly fine for a start so soon, eh?"

"Jolly, jolly fine," Roddy agreed and kissed him. "Dear, it is going to be wonderful here. I must fly or those cloggers will be cloggers!"

Jolly fine!

And jolly fine, to top the morning up, the friendship struck with Banjo Heritage, introduced by Jumbo, "the nicest fellow, Roddy. I took to him a heap."

Jumbo, who, rising seven, had her pet name not only from the solidity of her small person, but from the engaging stolidity of her expression and of her manner of speech, came to the vicar — exploring now the dank ruin of one-time potting sheds and out-houses — just at midday, dragging by the hand what appeared to David to be a rather pleasantly shy young man and introducing him with complete aplomb. "Father, this man has got a funny name, Banjo. He says he was called that because when he was as small as me he had strings on his nose that twanged like a banjo when you touched them. A banjo is like a fiddle. He has got two squirls in his garden, called Frederick and James, and they come into his room and sit on his knee and eat nuts, and I am to go there whenever I like and play with them. A squirl is like a guinea pig with a bushy tail. A guinea pig is like a rabbit. He is going to give me a guinea pig. I like him."

"I rather like her," said Banjo, laughing and extending his hand. "We encountered at the top of your lane and were rather excited to find both our names

ended in O, and she took possession of me and I could not get away. My other name is Heritage. I am ever so glad to meet you. Is there anything I can do for you, just arrived?"

David expressed himself, as indeed instantly he felt himself to be, as equally glad to meet Banjo. "You will be a relation of Pelham Heritage, of course? A brother?"

"A half-brother; I do not live at Great House, though. Don't think I am going to stop and get in your way now. Later on ——"

"Far from in my way," David assured him. "I am only prowling round, inspecting. Point of fact, I was this minute off up to the Manor to borrow a hammer and a few other tools. Everything you touch in the vicarage comes away in your hand."

Banjo laughed that he could imagine it. "But why to the Manor, now I have rolled up? Be a pal and let me fit you up with what you want. My place is nearer."

David was delighted to be a pal. A thrilled yell from Philippa up the garden took Jumbo bolting from them; and the two left took way to Banjo's cottage, much talking as they went. David had guessed by the time the cottage was reached that all was not as well as it might have been with Banjo and his half-brother; Banjo had heard, and had noted with a quick look the something marked eagerness with which it came to him, that to Admiral Bratton and all that Admiral Bratton was going to do (told in much detail, even to the pull with the Bishop, even to mention of Fontwych) was owed David's coming here. Banjo had set it in train by coincidence, which struck David, of using precisely the same phrase as had been used to him by Mr. Custom. "Ashton Parva is rather a remote little place," he had said, as they went

along; and David had replied to that with a note, which struck Banjo, of one assuring not only his listener but himself, much as he had replied to Mr. Custom, "the Admiral" in every sentence.

"Why, that is great hearing," Banjo declared. "The Admiral is a grand little chap; every one knows that. Here we are; come along in. Jolly bucking it must be for you, pushing off in your first vicarship, eh? And with everything so rosy? Good luck to it!"

"Thanks ever so much," said David. "Yes, it certainly is bucking; that is the word. This your place, eh? My word, this is jolly. Books? Always look at those first."

"Only a few scrubby textbooks, I am afraid," Banjo told him, "and a poet or two."

"Ah, you like poetry?" David cried.

"'Bout the only thing I do like. You?"

"Oh, keen, man, keen! Who have you got? Ah, Wordsworth, straight to my hand!"

"Good on you, Vicar! Wordsworth — stark beauty, eh?"

"The very phrase! Stark, sheer, unadorned, not a frill. Oh, I am enjoying myself! Shelley next to him; state Shelley?"

"Flames," said Banjo. "Flaming beauty."

"You have it!" David peered for another volume. "Keats?"

Banjo shook his head. "The word for Keats' beauty has not been made. Beauty that gets you by the throat:

> 'The self-same song that found a path
> Through the sad heart of Ruth when, sick for home,
> She stood in tears among the alien corn.'

"How can you put a name to that? 'Magic case-

ments opening on the foam of perilous seas;' or that?

'. . . and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise,
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.'"

He laughed and put his hand to his throat. "There is where the word for that kind of beauty is made — and you can't utter it."

David had turned from the shelves and was watching him with lambent eyes. "Well, I never expected to meet quite your sort down here."

Banjo looked at him quizzically. "Not met much where you came from — Shadpool?"

David said grimly, "It was not!"

Banjo laughed. "But I expect this sort was." He crossed to the bureau and opened it, and took the stopper from a decanter, and laughed again. "Wasn't it?"

David said nothing.

Banjo poured a drink. "No good offering you one, I suppose?"

David, watching his man, shook his head.

"Well, you won't mind if I do?" said Banjo, and added the soda; and David, his estimation of the other seemingly concluded, said, "Not a bit. You go ahead."

The glass, almost at Banjo's lips, was arrested by him while he stared at the other across its top. Then he three parts drained it and set it down. "Ah, I wanted that. I most times do. You asked me, coming along just now, what I do down here." He took up the glass again. "Chiefly this."

David said, "Well, so long as you are conscious of it."

Banjo repeated his stare. "Say, you are a rum sort of a chap for a parson, aren't you? Sit down. Cigarettes there. Aren't you, though?"

David glanced at the clock. "No, I must not stop; we feed at one. I will just collect those tools, if I may. Rum sort? No, I don't think so. But that sort of thing," he indicated the bureau, "as you do it, openly and aware of what you are doing, that doesn't worry me very much."

"Well, I would call that rum — in your suit of clothes. What does worry you?"

"Why, I do not judge a man by what he drinks or how he gets his pleasure. That stuff — that is just a fool's game. You can stop drink to-morrow."

"*Can* you," said Banjo. "You start it and try;" and David could not help but join him in his laugh.

"I will show you," said David, "one day how. No — I judge a man by his heart; so, in my belief, does ——" He broke off. "Well, I am not going to start preaching — yet. But that is my — what would your word for it be? — my lay. That is what I have come here to preach and am going on further with — that it is the spirit that matters, not the flesh. The flesh soon drops into line, once the spirit comes on deck." He broke off again. "Look out, I shall be in the pulpit in a minute. Can you really spare those tools?"

"You interest me," Banjo said.

He stood a moment profound in thought, looking straightly at David. Then he moved slowly to the cupboard whence he had taken the brass plate on the occasion of Dawn's visit and opened its door. "Look in here," he said absently. "Help yourself."

David put his hands to his desires. "Fine!" he said. He had that love of efficient carpenter's instruments

frequent in men, almost totally absent in women, which marks that singularly wide difference between the sex whose interest is in how a thing works and the sex that cares solely that it does work, and Banjo's array delighted him. "Hammer, screwdriver, pliers, footrule — may I really take all these?"

It interested Banjo anew in David that, genuinely, he appeared to have no desire to take the opportunity that certainly he had had of occupying the pulpit; appeared entirely to have detached himself from the matter. "Take the lot," he replied. "Shove that bag of nails in your pocket. That stuff of yours about the spirit and the flesh; I will tell you one thing about it that occurs to me. If you are going to rob people down here, or anywhere, of their pious joy in pointing their fingers at the likes of me, and are going to start them examining instead, their own cellars — spiritual, not spiritous cellars — if you are going to do that, you are going to take a lot of fun out of righteous lives; you are not going to be mighty popular."

David laughed contentedly. "You leave that to me. I am going to do a lot down here. I really must be off." They shook hands. "We shall meet again?"

"Heaps. I will see you to the gate. Yes, rather, heaps."

"Jolly good. Do you go to church?"

"I do not," said Banjo flatly.

"Well, you will always find the door on the latch," returned Quest cheerfully. "If you ever find it locked, tell me."

He was moving away but Banjo detained him. "I will tell you something else," he said. He nodded his head towards the church, visible from where they stood. "I was flung out of that church."

"Flung out?"

"When you came in here just now," said Banjo, "I took opportunity to tell you that my chief hobby was drinking, partly because I am not, unfortunately, ashamed of it, partly because I prefer stories against myself to be told by myself. There was a thing I never would have had you know, though — but you shall. Seems odd in me, but I rather like going to church. There was a pretty fierce chap used to come over from Westonbury on Sundays to take service here a while back; he knew all about me and told me so with his eye, without ever using any other of his parts of speech. One Sunday I thought I would go and I came in late, and I made rather a fool of myself getting into my pew. The pews have doors, as you know, and I couldn't open mine and fumbled it badly and a kid laughed. Thought I was drunk. So did other people. So did this fierce parson chap. Stopped in the lesson he was reading — only a few yards from me, I had come in by the west door and gone straight to a front pew — and watched me. Then the door of the pew shot open and I tripped over the little step and fell down. Ricked a groggy knee of mine and couldn't get up again. More giggling. Down comes the fierce parson chap, and whispers to me, and when I could get up, what could I do? I couldn't make a scene, not a worse one, in there, arguing with him whether I was sober or not. I went out. Conducted down the aisle."

David said, "A rotten business. Heritage, that is not going to stop you coming now?"

"Full stop," said Banjo. "It is not tuppence to me what people round about say of me. I am several dozen bottles past that stage. But facing them in that church with them all whispering and nudging together that last time I was there I was turned out drunk — no, thanks, nothing doing."

"Absurd."

Banjo shook his head decisively. " No."

" Look here, come to early service."

" Early service! You are never going to start early service here? "

" Most certainly I am. Daily. Beginning to-morrow."

" Man alive, who the devil — who on earth do you suppose will come to it? "

" Man alive," said David, " who on earth can come to a service if there isn't one? That is the way I look at it."

" Well, you try," recommended Banjo, pleasantly grim.

David took the challenge, smiling. " I am not going to try. I am going to do it. And look at this; I get you here. If you are right, and no one is going to turn up, all the easier for you. Come and be clerk to me and congregation as well. Come on; that's a bargain! "

" If you never make more sure of a bargain than that," said Banjo, smiling too, " I recommend you not to trade. Early service! Me! "

" I win this one," cried David. " You fix the hour it shall be. Eight? Seven? Six? "

" Hopeless, more hopeless, most hopeless."

David began to step away. " Eight it shall be. Speak up the responses loud and clear. So long! "

Another claim staked! Claim number two! He went back to luncheon, whistling loud, striding big. How glorious everything was! What enthusiasm for all he was going to do he would pour out before the Admiral this evening! Hungry with happiness, he found Roddy, Philippa and Jumbo, equally hungry as they declared themselves, equally high-spirited as, assembled about the table, they showed themselves to be; and " What is it, Roddy? "

he jovially inquired, drawing in his chair and examining the dishes.

"It's chops," announces Roddy, raising a cover. "Purchased by Mrs. Glumday, cooked by me. It's chopses, as she calls them."

"And cloggers!" cries Philippa, thin and nine and very shrill, and shrieking this delicious word at the top of her shrillness. "Cloggers, Father!"

"'Rah, chops!" cries David. "'Rah chops! 'Rah cloggers! Jumbo, say 'Rah, cloggers!"

"What does *'Rah* mean?" inquired Jumbo, cautious apparently lest it might mean No or None.

"It means 'hip, hip, hurrah', when you say it for chops, and 'Rather,' when you say it for cloggers."

"'Rah chops, 'Rah cloggers, 'Rah potatoes, no 'Rah cabbage," said Jumbo in solemn ritual; and "'Rah everything for me, please!" shrieks Philippa; whereupon David helps the whole of the cabbage from the dish onto one plate, which he puts before Jumbo, hands an empty plate to Philippa, pushes the chops before Roddy and the cloggers before himself, and taking the largest dumpling upon a fork, makes pretence of being about to swallow it at a mouthful.

"I suppose you know, Father," solemnly says Jumbo, who is seated opposite the kitchen door, "that Mrs. Glumday is watching you."

"And glad, sir," says Mrs. Glumday from the door, as David, abashed, hurriedly replaces the dumpling, "to see food enjoyed, though only rising for to close the door and never to peep and pry, which never has been my failing in life, others though I may have. Chopses is timid this morning," continues she, not so disposed to close the door now that she has found opportunity to open her mouth, "as I told your lady wife when I brought 'em in

from Mr. Ginger's wrapped in the *Daily Herald,* him being one of these 'ere communionists which I never was nor will be having King George's picture pasted back of Queen Victoria's in the same frame and turning them Sundays, which is why I advised a nice dish of cloggers, knowing children eats hearty through ten of me own and all doing well what is left, which is four, one married, one emigranted and two in service, good places though strick, but what I says to young girls is — That young lady's got the chokes," broke off Mrs. Glumday, to point at Philippa, who appeared to have found the cramming of her handkerchief into her mouth the only means of suppressing her laughter.

"She will be quite all right, thank you, Mrs. Glumday," says Roddy, glad to give attention to Philippa's distress in order to conceal her own. "I would get your own lunch now, I think;" and when Mrs. Glumday, warning first that there is many a man been carried off by a choke might have coughed all his life and never took hurt of it, finally has withdrawn and closed the door behind her, general laughter is vented on a shout; and David, wiping his eyes, inquires what on earth are timid chops, and is told it means, in Mrs. Glumday's diction, small; and the cabbage is replaced in its dish and general order restored; and plates are heaped and grace then said; and to the grace, pronounced by Jumbo, added, most fervently, by David, a special thanks for all this abundant happiness here in this new, most happy life poured down upon them; from which he must arise and go to Roddy, and bending over her, embrace her, and have her arms come up around his neck, tears of great gladness glistening in her eyes; and then must needs stretch out an arm and take a glass, and standing up, command a toast, all standing, in glorious Ash-

ton Parva water, Roddy's hand in his: "The Admiral! God bless him!"

However, the body of the Admiral, whose horse had fallen with him at a stake-and-bound and rolled on him, at that moment was being carried on a hurdle through a field, a coat across his face and breast, one pink arm hanging, trailing.

CHAPTER XII

THAT WHICH THOU SOWEST

"Now, I would say," says Miss Eider, stepping briskly along to the funeral service with Miss Trapper and Mrs. Distaff, whom she has just encountered amid the arriving cars and alighting occupants which crowd the village street from end to end, "I would say that this is a very remarkable opportunity for this new vicar here, and one which he cannot but welcome, half the county here and all. I hear he is a very earnest man, most devout, most capable, actually has already started daily early service, *but* with a very poor, flat, toneless delivery."

"Oh, *that* sort of delivery," says Mrs. Distaff, screwing at a finger of the glove she is putting on as if it were the kind of delivery in question and she were screwing its head off. "You know, I think I can make allowances for any kind of delivery, even an Oxford delivery, except a *toneless* delivery. You know, I do think that if a man cannot put some sort of solemnity, that is all I ask for, solemnity——"

"And as to solemnity, you know," takes up Miss Trapper, speaking with just the merest, nicest suspicion of catch in her voice, "it happens that, even apart from our loss of the dear Admiral, the service will have a *personal* solemnity to me. I should have been, I am sorry to say, in mourning in any case — Sir Toovey Trapper of Auchinblach in Perthshire, no doubt you saw it in the *Morning Post?*"

"Ah, sad!" murmurs Miss Eider, who had not, compassionately.

"Oh, not a *close* relative," responds Miss Trapper,

speaking with the wan cheerfulness of one bearing up in affliction. "A connection, no more; but one does feel, as one gets older, you know, the snapping of ties, the—the severance of links."

She gives a sad little toot on her nose with her pocket handkerchief; and Miss Eider, responding as it were to the toot, declares, "Well, there again will be, just as here, a great gathering of friends; and as I was saying, I do think, that with such an impressive, such a representative gathering of the countryside as is here to-day, it is, for this new vicar, not here a first Sunday yet, a most remarkable opportunity to show——"

Opportunity!

"*The Priest and Clerks,*" says the Burial office, "*meeting the corpse at the entrance of the Church-yard, and going before it, either into the Church or towards the Grave, shall say or sing.*"

There are no clerks here, no choir. The man who was to have read the lessons in this church, standing before the choir, funds and surplices for which, special surplices for Festival services, he was to have provided, is hearing other choirs now, his abandoned body slowly now being carried to the church, cold as its stones, more useless. The clerk, gaily invited in his name of Banjo by the priest three days before to be clerk and congregation too at early service, has done his office at eight o'clock that morning, stepping to the priest when it was done with hand outstretched and, "Vicar, Quest, this has hit you very hard, I am afraid—old man."

The priest, waiting this opportunity which, so splendid, half the country here, Miss Eider feels he cannot but gladly welcome, is waiting it in the vestry, waiting for Philippa, posted at the churchyard gate, to come and tell him that the cortege is in view. He is not, as he waits, standing

braced for this great opportunity that is his. He is not, as he waits, in devotional attitude of prayer, preparing for this great opportunity. He is kneeling on the stone floor before a table, his arms and head and shoulders as it were collapsed upon it. His mind contains solely that which almost solely has occupied it since, when they went blithely up to tea that day, he met the news that there awaited him. It is from the office which he shall intone as, "meeting the Corpse at the entrance of the Church-yard" he goes before it. "*The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away*"; and, alternating with it, that which he has found when rehearsing again the lesson that is appointed for him to read, "*Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.*"

Philippa's sharp whisper: "Father!"

He has not heard her enter. He does not hear her voice. "*Thou fool, that which thou sowest . . . except it die.*"

Phillipa tiptoes to him and touches him. "Father! Father, it is coming!"

He turns to her a face that frightens her. He clutches her to him with a pressure, passionate, overwhelming (*"Thou fool, that which thou sowest!"*) that hurts her.

He goes out.

The church is crammed as never in its four hundred years of history has it approached to being crammed. Half the Forrardon Hunt is here, half the countryside is here, everybody is here. Drizzle, torn from ecstatic admiration of the nice grave he has dug by a vicar whose face and manner ever since he gave instruction to dig it have fair frightened him (as he confided to his friend Mr. Glumday) back into the rumbles, and commanded to see that chairs and forms are brought up from wherever available, has watched the immediate filling of them and fled in dismay to conceal himself till he shall be required for his proper duty of filling

in the grave. "A man," as he told Mr. Glumday in the taproom of the King's Head on the previous night, "as is subjec' to a nasty mischief like the rumbles don't want to get frightened into 'em lookin' up out of his nice grave he's digging an' seeing a man bellering down to him to get out for to do something else. That ain't the way to talk to a man that's fit to be a 'orspital case, bellering at 'im ain't."

"That's just it," said Mr. Glumday, himself not inexperienced in being bellered at, and putting a sympathetic hand to his afflicted knee; and other hands, equally sympathetic, are being put to knees totally unaccustomed to any strain but gripping horses as half the Forradon Hunt, half the countryside, on arrival puts knees to flagstones of the church and, sitting up, decides not to do it again. Sir Jim is here, Bill Venture is here, others of the Piers Castle set are here. Jim Heritage, staring cheerfully about more as if he were in a theatre than in a church, catches Pelham Heritage's eye (Pelham with Dawn also here) and winks audaciously, then beams at Dawn and whispers to Bill, who also beams at her and whispers back, "By gad, she is!" "Introduce myself afterwards," says Bill. "Make old Pelham throw a fit!"

Medwyn Paradise is here, seated in a pew in which he is the only male, glinting around at other female pews. Three or four couple of physiologically male Flogg-Wallopers are here, wedged so tightly in the pews they occupy that it seems impossible that, when they have to rise, they can get to their feet without lifting the pew with them; each come in his hunting hat because it is the only silk hat he ever has; and each, except Sir Cropp, holding it on his knees because it would be impossible to cram in a cloth cap elsewhere among them, let alone a silk hat; and Sir Cropp the exception because he has sat down on his hat, and, unable to move till everybody else moves, remains seated upon it,

passing through, judging by the colour of his face, the advanced stages of an apoplectic fit as, or because, he does so. Lady Flogg-Walloper, wearing a man's blue overcoat about two inches thick and straining at buttons about two inches in diameter, is here; Banjo Heritage is here; Miss Pasture (at the organ) is here; Roddy, white and fagged looking as though she has had sleepless nights (she has, for David) is here; Philippa, not quite understanding why, but understanding dreadful sadness has been in the vicarage and holding tight her mother's hand because of it, is here; everybody is here.

"*We brought nothing into this world and it is certain*——" comes voice from the doorway. The vicar is here. "*The Lord gave and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*" The Admiral, what of him remains, is here.

Everybody, save one, thinks, at least for those brief moments while the coffin passes up between them, of the Admiral. Pelham Heritage alone is not thinking of the Admiral. He had thought of him, warmly and regretfully, as, with Dawn, he drove down to the church. "At our wedding, the heartiest, healthiest there; now dead; terrible, terrible!" he had said; but they had stepped straight out from the car into a mass of Flogg-Wallopers, and he had been compelled to introduce his wife, and he "reprobated" his wife meeting these people. Sir Cropp had done no harm. Sir Cropp, crimson, had saluted fingers to brim of his hunting hat, and exploded at Dawn only "D'ye hunt?"; and when Dawn, embarrassed, had shaken her head, had fallen, crimson, away. But Lady Flogg-Walloper had done infinite harm. Lady Flogg-Walloper, hurling away what looked to Pelham's disgusted eyes to be the butt end of a cigar with which she had emerged from her car, and opening with an eruption of smoke, had sprung upon Dawn,

two leg-of-mutton fists outstretched, with "Pah! Oh, my dear, what you must think of me never having called; but I never call, I only hunt, you know. And you not going to hunt! My dear child, you can't come down here and not hunt, you know! And you the very figure and weight for it, and hands; can't I tell by the feel of 'em! Not hunt, you don't tell me! Mr. Heritage, whatever to goodness is this about your wife not hunting? You bring the loveliest creature ever been seen in the countryside — don't mind me, my dear, I say what I like, you know — and let her tell us she don't hunt! Rubbish! That fox don't run, so it's no good starting it! My dear, you'll have to take this meeting for my call and now you must come to dinner. I'll ring 'ee up and ask 'ee. Cropp! Quorn! Where the dickens' my pack got to?"

Pelham detested that encounter. He detested his misfortune in catching Jim Heritage's roving eye. He detested the familiar wink his cousin gave him. He detested all these hunting Goths and savages amongst whom he found himself, and, much worse, had Dawn, sitting. He was not capable of regretting the sense of duty which had impelled him to suggest that, in respect to the man who had attended their wedding only six weeks before, Dawn should accompany him there; to regret having done a thing that his sense of the proprieties informed him should be done was impossible in him; but he felt, arising out of this fulfillment of a duty, a fiercer reprobation of these people who caused the duty to be so unpleasant; and he took pleasure in imagining himself able to arise and scourge them from this temple which not one of them but desecrated by entering. Well, he could not do that, but, working with this new vicar — he did not dislike the look of him: refined, sensitive, young enough to be influenced by a man of his standing, old enough to have his eyes open to the undesirable qualities of these hunting sets — working with him, he could make this

church into the pleasant, proper, strictly evangelical place of worship that it should be. He would speak with him after the ceremony. Yes, good, when the move to the graveside was made, he would send Dawn away in the car, escaping her further undesirable meetings, and then himself wait for a word or two with this new man, sound him, advise him, and put things in train for regular Sunday attendance at this, which was his proper parish church. It had always been a matter of vexation to him that, disgusted by that hopeless, slovenly old Pewish, he had been unable to attend this church at his gates and had had to drive out to that stupid, nervous Keepsake whom, unfortunately, he had put into Malford Regis when, the living falling vacant, he had purchased the advowson from his cousin — despising James anew for parting with so sacred a privilege. Relations between himself and James had become (on his own part) so embittered that, when Pewish died, he had not permitted himself to negotiate for this advowson: never mind, the incumbency appeared to have been well filled. Yes, good, he would arrange, immediately after his service, to have service here according to his liking, would undertake to read the lessons, and would warn this young man against permitting the place to be polluted by such, for instance, as that Banjo, who actually was here to-day, his first attendance doubtless since that abominable incident when he was turned out. Well, it would be his last! Yes, good, he would settle all this directly afterwards with this new man. Ah, he had not been attending. Where had he got to in the service?

This new man has got to the point at which, feeling it, in view of the Admiral's popularity, incumbent upon him to do so, he is ascending the pulpit steps to deliver a brief address. He is past the point at which tonelessly ("Really a *shocking* delivery," had gone Miss Eider's whisper to

Mrs. Distaff) he has delivered St. Paul's superb interpretation of death to the Corinthians, the supreme majesty, the exquisite beauty of which often aforetime ("Oh, keen, man, keen," as he had said to Banjo on the poets) he has rendered superbly. He is past the point at which, tonelessly reading it, his voice at *"Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die",* has checked, faltered a moment, then tonelessly on again. He is at the point now when, standing in the pulpit, collecting, as his congregation imagine, his thoughts on what he shall say before he opens his lips, he is, in fact, not thinking of that at all. His observers are doing that for him. Miss Eider is imagining that he is realising at last what a really wonderful opportunity this is for him and is bracing himself to grasp it to the full; village people who have squeezed in are expecting that he is going to twist their vitals with dramatic "In the midst of life we are in death" reminders; the Flogg-Wallopers, who are themselves squeezed in and are bursting to get out, are imagining he is going to tell them what a game little rider to hounds the Admiral was and perhaps give them an account of a run or two, told him by the dead man; Bicester, indeed, the literary one, has his imagination stirred to the point of misty expectations of hearing something about the Admiral now doubtless being engaged in crying on hounds in some sort of Egyptian fields (or some word like that), which he has a vague recollection of having heard are spoken of by chaps who wrote books and things; Medwyn Paradise, glinting, is expecting to hear the usual panegyrics of the dead, to the absurdity of which he can, later on, glinting, call attention. Everybody is expecting something of these kinds; everybody knows more or less what is in the vicar's mind as he stands there, silent a few moments, looking down upon them.

Only Roddy, in point of fact, actually does know.

He is thinking, as he stands there, that this, at last, is the

moment to which he has been looking forward all his life since his ordination, of which he had spoken to his mother on that night of his first sermon, of which he has talked a thousand times with Roddy, of which he has thought, with visualisation of actual place and circumstance ever since that Sunday when, as he told Mr. Custom, he took service here to gathering of nine all told — this moment now of his first sermon in his own pulpit, in his own church, Roddy there in the vicar's pew beneath him, the pews all filled to hear him.

It is as he had wished. Here he is. There Roddy is. There the full congregation is. Here with the opening of his mouth his great name in the Church is.

Not so.

Predominant in the picture was to have been, in the front pew, the chubby, cheery, rosy figure of him whose kindliness had made the picture, by whose support the picture gleamed in richest colours — or fell away to ashes. That figure was not there. Its hand was powerless; its heart was cold; its voice was still. It lay stretched out down here upon those trestles, a Union Jack enshrouding it, two wreaths, a hunting crop, a pair of spurs, laid on the Jack.

"Thou fool, that which thou sowest . . . ."

He spoke a few bald, lifeless sentences. For all the references personal to the dead man that they contained, they might have been spoken, the Forradon set thought, above the grave of anybody; for all the lessons and the moral that they taught or drew from sudden death, they might have been spoken, the villagers thought, in course of any sermon, preached on any subject; for all the seizing of an opportunity that they showed they might have been recited, the Eider pew thought, by any hired, tired *locum* indifferent to any impression he might make. Everybody, speaking generally, was disappointed. The Flogg-Wallop-

ers, in so far as they understood anything that moved on two legs instead of on four, understood why people did not go to church; the villagers, in so far as they had any intention of resuming, under a new vicar, church-going habit, abandoned that intention; Miss Eider, Mrs. Distaff and Miss Trapper, in so far as they had any idea of varying occasionally their attendance at the church at Malford Regis, gave up that intention. Banjo, who knew a little, felt sorry for the man; Roddy, who knew all, had her heart bleed for the man; Pelham, who knew nothing, felt that at least he knew this lifeless type of man and easily could manage him into the way that he should go. The man himself, conscious, not of failure, but of a sense of being deserted, of standing alone, a strange man in a strange country, comported himself as such, sealing his loneliness, unable to cry out that which was within him as one in a foreign assembly, speaking not the tongue, is unable to be understood.

He came down from the pulpit and presently was conducting the coffin, all the congregation following, to the grave. He recited the last offices. Jim Peel, the Forradon huntsman, stepped forward and wound on his horn a call which, meaningless to him, aroused, he noticed, the first sign of interest in the faces that had fronted him since the service began. Its echoes had not faded when already the throng, everybody disappointed, everybody going with a sense that something that should have been done had not been done, was melting away.

In two minutes he was alone, looking down upon the last of the Admiral, Roddy with him.

Her hand came into his. "Dearest, I will go in and have a good cup of tea ready for you."

He said, "Yes, do that, Roddy."

He remained there, thinking.

CHAPTER XIII

ONE GOES AWAY

It was as he approached the door of the vestry, there to disrobe, that Pelham Heritage, who, at the dispersal, had gone there to await him, came up to him. Pelham was in edged temper. As he had been conveying Dawn away to their car, Cousin James deliberately had appeared in their path, introduced himself to Dawn, insisted on walking to the car with her, obviously, by his airy chatter, had entertained her. It had exasperated Pelham and he stood there awaiting David, gnawing his exasperation.

And David was in uncertain temper. There was full and suddenly upon him now — come with his sight of the sudden animation of the gathering at the winding of that horn — the realisation that he had stood for the first time before his people in number such as he might never again assemble them and had failed lamentably in his chance to show them that one was come among them who intended their church to be to them what it should be. This, on the top of what he had been through since news of the Admiral's death had been received by him, atop of what had been imposed upon it by this ordeal of the burial of the Admiral, left him, now all that was done and the future immediately to be faced, a sick man. He wanted to be alone. He wanted to get to Roddy. He did not want to be held by this stranger waiting here for him whosoever he might be.

The encounter, on both sides, was not propitious.

Pelham stepped up and introduced himself, and David recognised him then. "Parishioners of mine," proudly he

had said of him and of his bride to Mr. Custom; "that is, are going to be parishioners." Now were — and in circumstances how different from those in which, first seeing them, he had poured out to the friendly little solicitor his elation and his ambitions!

"Ah, yes, of course," he now said. "I am glad to meet you."

He had made the effort necessary for this contact; but he had carried it no further than formality demanded, and his manner implied that he was not at that moment disposed to carry it further. Pelham, however, intended that the interview should be carried very considerably further. "I am very interested to meet you," he said. "There are several matters ——" He made the motion of shivering at the bleak day and put his eyes to the vestry door.

The suggestion had to be accepted. "Yes, step in, please," said David. "This wind is bitter."

He was himself blue with cold suffered at the graveside. He had been too concerned with other things to think of putting on a greatcoat. He could scarcely prevent his teeth from chattering as, facing the other, he began to draw off his surplice.

Pelham had no remark to make on that. "I am very interested to meet you," he repeated again at once, "thus early on your arrival here, because there is information I can give you on several points which will, I think, be useful to you."

There was only one chair in the room and he took it. "I will sit down, I think. I am glad you have come to us, Mr. Quest. This parish has needed for many years a responsible man, a man of the type I think you to be."

"Thank you," said David. "Yes, information, you were saying?"

"Personally," continued Pelham, who proposed to give his information in his own time and in his own way, setting

down his hat beside him and crossing his legs to do so at his ease, "Personally, I have, to my regret, been quite unable to attend service here — such service as there has ever been. I have worshipped at Malford Regis church, of which I am the patron. Now that you are here, I shall of course come here. I shall be happy to read the lessons for you."

David turned away to hang up his surplice. The reading of the lessons by the Admiral had been so significant a part in all their plans together that he had a feeling as it were of desecration of a memory at imagination of the office thus immediately and suddenly acquired by another.

"The Admiral was going to do that," was his reply.

"No doubt, no doubt," agreed Pelham perfunctorily. "As regards the evening service, it would suit me a good deal better to have it at six instead of six-thirty, which I think was Mr. Pewish's hour. I shall be sending down all our domestic staff, and six o'clock——"

David took down his hat. "I will be going into all these things," he said. "If half-past six has been the accustomed time——"

Pelham glanced up at him quickly.

"As to that," he said, "since Mr. Pewish's death I understand there has been no evening service. It will be easy for you to arrange things just as you wish."

The impulse in David's mind was to reply, "Yes, as I wish, certainly"; with "not as you wish" for its unspoken implication. His disinclination for this interview was augmented now by the something prescriptive tone which he apprehended in the other's conduct of it. He had been caught in the mood, all his ground cut from under his feet, in which a kind word, a friendly hand, would have opened all the vials of natural response to such, as a warm hearth would have melted his frozen veins. Here was the reverse of the sympathetic and its effect upon his temper was as the effect of new onset of bitter wind upon the body of a

man already numbed with cold. This was his parish, and, more germane to the feelings arising within him, it was the Admiral's parish. He resented, on his own account, this air of consequence and of dictation; and he resented it, much more strongly, on the Admiral's account. There developed in him towards Pelham Heritage, sitting so assuredly there, the feeling as of a stepchild towards a stepmother who at her first coming appears to change the order and to violate the memory of the dead.

He checked the impulse. He restrained the feeling. "What I am proposing to do," he said evenly, but, as he knew, and did not mind knowing, coldly, "is to sound the people, to get the pulse of the village, before making any movements, certainly before making any alterations. If the hour of evening service seems immaterial to them——"

"You will find," said Pelham, "that anything whatever to do with the church is entirely immaterial to them."

He did not give with the words the note of laughter that another might have given with them, making of them a cynical observation rather than a considered indictment. This interview was not going quite as he had expected it to go; and he was not accustomed, in that part of the country, to experience difficulty in any interview he might grant. He stood up. "What you have to prepare yourself for in this place, Mr. Quest, what, in point of fact, I have come here very largely to acquaint you with, is an entire absence of any religious feeling whatsoever. This village in effect has had no church for years. It is dead to the Church."

"I have come here," said David, "to give it a church."

Pelham sat down again. "Admirable. I am sure you have. It is a matter in which I too am deeply interested. It is a cause for which, working together, we can do much."

"In my turn," said David, "admirable."

Pelham for the second time looked quickly at him. The tone, something in the inflection of the voice, was not quite

what he would have wished. He let it pass. "Your views, the manner of your services, you are of evangelical persuasion, I trust?"

David stiffened. Was this man here to examine him, in his own vestry? But he also let pass. "Why, I do not know," he said, "that I have ever given much thought to labels of that kind. I have no fancy for classifications, I think. I would say, for what it matters, that the vicars I have served under, at Shadpool probably, at Fordsham possibly, in my licenceship period with Father Absolute certainly, would describe themselves as Anglican. Father Absolute would go further. He would say Anglo-Catholic."

Pelham was silent. He "reprobated" the cult Anglo-Catholic; he particularly reprobated the use of the term "Father" in the Church of England.

"I regret that," he then said.

David was silent.

Pelham got up, reaching first for his hat. "Well, I have not said all that I came to say. You will think over perhaps what little I have said. For a young man coming unknown into a rural parish such as this, it is not ill to have the support of a resident of influence such as myself."

David would have let that go. He had lost, utterly, support of the kind which had meant everything to him and to those dependent upon him. His character was far, and in his present mood especially far, from being the type that would accept support of the kind here offered, given with patronage, entailing obligations, demanding subservience. "Oh, *that* sort of spirit," Mrs. Distaff had declared, on hearing from Medwyn Paradise that he had "jibbed badly" at accepting, so to speak, charity; and that sort of spirit, outstandingly, was his. But Pelham Heritage, moving to the door, spoke again; and his words this time touched every generous impulse in David's nature.

"I came here to you," Pelham said, "with the best intentions."

David's natural impulses were more than touched; they were reproached. He had been behaving unmannerly, unchristianly. "Mr. Heritage," he said warmly, "please do not go away with the impression I am afraid I have given you. I have not been myself. The Admiral, who I have but this minute buried, though a very recent friend, was a very dear one. I have been badly upset. Also," he laughed slightly, "I am desperately cold. I appreciate very much your looking in like this. Your intentions, of course, were of the best and I thank you very much for them and value them. This matter of — of persuasions, of tendencies within the Church, I have told you that to me they mean nothing. I would be the last, the very last, to inflict practices of my own — if I had any special to myself — on any community unaccustomed to them or likely to be offended by them. I have only one principle in my work, only one object in view, I am sure it is yours also, to bring the Church to the people, to bring the people to the Church."

Pelham, smiling, much restored, put out his hand. "That is excellent, Mr. Quest. That is admirable. That is what I expected. We will work together; you will find that we will do much together."

The door was open for him, he had opened it himself. "If only," David thought afterwards, "he had gone through it then!"

But he closed the door and faced David newly. "I had begun to speak to you," he said, "of the people amongst whom you will find yourself, of the entire absence among them of any religious response. I will not detain you now; I should have noticed before that you are not in a fit state for it. But there are certain things which — very briefly — you cannot, I think, know too soon. This congregation that you

saw before you just now; of course you will never see its like, or anything in any degree approaching its like, again. And better so."

If only he had gone then!

But David, at those last three words—"and better so"—had opened his eyes; and Pelham, at that opening, went on to remove the surprise the gesture showed.

"Indeed, yes, better so. I speak as one who knows these people too well, to one who does not. Of the residential class about here you will get none to your church, Mr. Quest——"

David smiled at him. "But I have one," he said, "already."

It was Pelham's eyes now that opened.

"I have started early service," David went on.

"Early service!"

The tone of Pelham's repetition of the words might have evidenced the Anglo-Catholic connection which in his mind the practice had; but David, too pleased with the success he had to narrate, did not notice the implication.

"Yes, daily; I began on Wednesday. My feeling is, and always has been, that unless you give your people the opportunity, abundant opportunity, how can you expect— At Shadpool— ; but, as I was saying, my one resident already; at the Celebration this morning——"

"Celebration? This morning?"

"Before the funeral, yes; and one of your residents——"

Pelham was a little relieved. The occasion, after all, might be said to justify the service; and relieved, "Ah, before the funeral," he said. "Yes, quite proper, no doubt. As to the resident who attended, that was Miss Pasture, I have no doubt, and I would of course except her when I spoke of the entirely irreligious——"

David smiled again. "No, not Miss Pasture; one distinctly, I should say, more of the indifferent residents you speak of — young Heritage; Banjo Heritage, as they call him; your half-brother, I think."

The word Heritage was not out of his mouth when he saw the change in Pelham's face. It was rigid when he had finished.

"I am sorry to hear this," Pelham said.

David echoed "Sorry?" and it was Pelham's turn to have perceived, and not to appreciate, an implication in the other's tone.

"It appears," he said coldly, movement of his lips, his mouth so firmly set, scarcely to be discerned as he spoke, "that, early in your arrival as I have come to you, I have not come soon enough. That man, my half-brother unfortunately, has no right, Mr. Quest, to enter this church."

Now David stiffened. "No *right?*"

"Less than none."

David stared. "But — but is — is it to be said of any one coming to a church that he has no right?"

"It is to be said of him. He is not fit to."

"Not fit to?"

"Mr. Quest, I saw him just now at this funeral service. I was amazed. When you speak to me of his attending Celebration, actually participating, do you tell me that, in ——?"

"I tell you that."

"I am shocked; I am profoundly and inexpressibly shocked."

David began, "Mr. Heritage ——"

Pelham held up his hand. "Please hear me. You must prepare yourself to be as shocked as I. That man was turned out of this church."

David made to speak; again the other's hand repressed

him. "I mean, scarcely as you will wish to credit it, actually, in the middle of a service, turned out by the officiating priest for——"

David's hand went out. "I have heard that story."

"Heard it? But not before you admitted him——?"

"Before."

Pelham went back two paces. All his body was rigid as his face. "Do you tell me, Mr. Quest, that knowing that he had had to be turned out of this church, you permitted him——"

"I invited him."

Pelham drew a very deep breath and held it. When he released it, it was as though he would drive away with it the condition between himself and David which now, releasing his breath, he named as "misunderstanding." The tension of his pose relaxed; he spoke, though deeply, quietly. "Mr. Quest," he said, "there has been misunderstanding, tragic misunderstanding here. You spoke just now of having heard this 'story', meaning, obviously, that the horrible affair has been presented to you, by my half-brother himself, of course, as an invention."

David also spoke quietly. "As a mistake, Mr. Heritage, an exaggeration."

Pelham, harder again, gestured impatience. "A juggling with truth. I tell you that it was so. The man had been drinking."

"Mr. Heritage," David said, "I do not believe that it was so. But let me tell you this, that even if it *had* been so——"

Pelham started. "I will not hear it. I will not believe it of you."

"Mr. Heritage, I think you should hear it. I wish you to believe it of me. Even if this had been true, even if worse had been true, still I would not deny such a man; still I would welcome such a man."

"Monstrous," said Pelham. He appeared to have difficulty in articulating the word, and he repeated it, "Monstrous!"

But David, according to his lights, was on sure ground and spoke surely. "Mr. Heritage, I do not in the least impugn your word," he said. "I only ask you to listen to my view. My view, and it happens that I follow all my vicar's in it, is, simply, that if one, seemingly abandoned and however abandoned, has the desire for the most sacred comfort that the Church can give, it is not for us, not for me, to withold that comfort. That is all."

"And it is enough," said Pelham. "I wish you good morning."

At the door he turned. "Let me tell you before I go that by what you have done, at the outset of your career here, you have ruined your career here. When this is known in the village——"

"Mr. Heritage," David said, "let me tell you that at Shadpool, among the class to whom we ministered there, in the East End with Father Absolute with cause even greater, when we saw that we had drawn to our altar one whose life you would call monstrous, we gave glory to God for our careers."

Pelham wetted his lips. "It may be so. I know nothing of your Shadpools, nothing of your East Ends. I know these villagers. I know Ashton Parva. There is a strong Methodist influence here. It has taken many from our church; this view of yours, as you call it, this action of yours by which, not a week here, you have demonstrated your view, will drive to it the rest. If you suppose that the people here are coming, ever, to kneel before the altar of your church with the knowledge that they may find themselves kneeling next to one flagrantly and notoriously such as is the man you say that you have invited—if you suppose that, Mr. Quest, you are making the mistake of your life. You spoke

of having come here to bring the Church to the people, the people to the Church. God help them, you have finally driven them from the Church."

David half turned away.

Pelham had not yet done. "I will add this. I came to you here with every kindest and most helpful intention. You have gone out of your way to flout me. I tell you that even if you had the people here behind you, as most solemnly I warn you you have set them against you, still, by outraging me, who am a power in this place, still you have made the mistake of your life in coming here, Mr. Quest."

He went.

CHAPTER XIV

ONE COMES HOME

David passed across the churchyard to the gate of the vicarage garden which gave upon it. His head was bowed; he trembled in all his body as he walked. It was not with cold that he trembled; he had forgotten how cold he was. He trembled, and did not know that he was trembling, in reaction of all his system against the strain to which it had been subjected now for four days since the Admiral's death, mounting almost to breaking point in this ceremony of the funeral, culminating in this scene with Pelham Heritage. That man's concluding words had been pronounced almost as a curse. "You have gone out of your way to flout me. . . . I tell you that you have made the mistake of your life in coming here." Thus might an oracle have spoken.

Who, stable of mind and body, will give notice to a prophecy of ill? But who, unstrung of nerves, suffering loss of sleep, neglect of food, exposure to bitter cold, is not a ready prey to omens? David had crossed to the church an hour before, numb with the feeling of one suddenly cut adrift from his supports; he returned from it shaken with the warning that he was cut adrift indeed. He was as one started upon a road with retreat cut off, who has gone to the end and found there a precipice.

The figure of a man among the graves close to his path took his attention. Some mourner from the funeral, he supposed, and in the depression that had him, would have passed; but the man, he perceived, was making hesitatingly towards him, as if to speak to him, and he had a sudden and a curious assistance, a comfort, from the sight. Numbed

by the completeness of his under-cutting by the Admiral's death; dismayed, in retrospect, by the swiftness with which the encounter with Pelham Heritage had rushed from peace to storm, from possible succour to utter wreck; he had a feeling of impotence, of inability to conduct his way aright, inability to escape, whichever way he turned, a blow, in which this chance to help a stranger, if it were only to be told the time that he required of him, was as a light in his darkness, as a thing stable where all crumbled beneath his hand.

He stopped and turned encouragingly towards the man; and the man, encouraged, came up to him and spoke. It was more than the time he wanted. "I am looking for a grave," he said. "I wonder, please, if you could help me?"

His voice, curiously subdued, strengthened in David a reminiscent stirring already touched as he caught fully the man's appearance. Haggard, grey, deeply lined, thinly bearded, presenting an utterly crushed look, giving the suggestion as of one carrying an immense weight, an insupportable grief, who has gone down beneath it, and now that crushed voice — where had he seen that aspect, heard this voice, before? Then he remembered. "I am new to the place," he said. "I am not familiar with all the graves; but I have no doubt I can help you. We have met before, do you know?"

The man looked at him with stricken eyes, dumbly; and those stricken eyes made David's recollection sure. "You got out of the train at Westonbury, from the carriage I was in, one evening some weeks ago."

Still in that voice so curiously subdued, still with that look in his eyes so desperately stricken, "It is very possible," the man said. "I do not remember you; but it is very possible. I was setting out on the same search some little time ago; but my courage failed me; I did not come. I turned back at Westonbury."

Quite clearly it was confirmation of some fear that he had not had courage to resolve. "What name, whose grave is it that you seek?" David asked.

"I have looked everywhere; I have not found it," the man replied. "The name is Pasture."

"Pasture!"

The word was cried by David so sharply that the man, starting, attached his own meaning to the sound. He pointed across to the Admiral's grave, its mount of clay beside it, waiting to be returned. "I have not dared go near it," he cried. "Is that her grave? My mother's grave?"

David caught his breath. An amazing, a miraculous thing to have befallen him! "Your mother? You are Mrs. Pasture's son? Her missing son?"

The man bowed his head.

Amazing? That old woman, that light nightly burning, that beautiful certainty her son would be restored to her! Amazing? Nay, glorious was the word!

He went impulsively forward, his face shining. He put out his hands and put them on Felix Pasture's arms and held him, shining at him. "Man, man, that is not your mother's grave, nor any here, nor anywhere. She lives, man! She longs for you. She expects you every day. She is expecting you now!"

Well that his hands held the other. Felix Pasture's weight came heavily forward upon him, his head dropping, his knees collapsing. David put strong, joyous arms about him. A tombstone was where they stood. He lowered him to it and in a moment was pouring out all that his excitement prevented him almost from speaking coherently.

"You tell me not dead, alive?" came faintly from the man.

"Man, man, alive and longing for you!"

"You tell me longing for me — for *me!*"

"Man, for you, you, her son! Look up. Look that way.

You can see the house from here. Man, if it were night, you would see a light burning in your window for you, at night, every night, to guide you to her arms!"

Felix Pasture did not look up. His face buried in his folded arms, he bowed himself upon the stone. "Great God!" he groaned. "Great God! Stand away from me, sir," he said. "I—I am overcome. I—I am swimming, dazed, dying. Great God! Great God!"

Felix Pasture, seated on the stone, his hands on either side of him trembling so that actually they drummed upon the granite, presently was saying. "You tell me that you know my story; and actually, knowing it, you tell me to up and go to her!"

"Man," cried David, carried away in this amazing happiness that he foresaw, and was the means of, "Man, I am of mind almost to put my arms around you and run you to her. Forgiven, I tell you, forgiven!"

"There are crimes it is not possible to forgive."

"Forgotten, man, forgotten!"

"There are sins impossible to forget."

Felix Pasture got himself shakily to his feet, turned and viewed across the distance where Stone House stood. David saw his lips move in the utterance of "Mother!" his stricken eyes filled with tears. He turned heavily to David. "I came to see where I was certain she must lie. I can go away, knowing that still she lives." He put both his hands to his breast. "God scourges me with His mercy."

A thing he had not told flashed into David's mind. "Man, God has been more merciful to you yet. I told you that your mother had forgotten. Man, it is literally, actually true! Whatever it is that you did, her mind has been wiped clean of it. In her mind it is as though it never had happened."

He had had from Miss Pasture at their interview all the story of the expunging from her mother's mind of every

recollection of the wrong the son had done them. He told it now; and as he told it, Felix, first staring upon him with eyes incredulous, staggered again to the stone and reeled upon it. His hands that formerly had drummed in his emotion gripped now upon the stone so that from nails and knuckles the blood drained, leaving them white.

"Go to her, man, go to her," David ended. "I tell you that she remembers nothing of you but her love for you."

"Do you tell me," Felix whispered, his voice, in the stress that was upon him, scarcely articulate, "that my mother remembers me only as what I used to be to her?"

"I tell you that."

"All my past," Felix said, and he seemed to be speaking to himself or, as one in a dream, to a ghost, "wiped out? My youth restored?"

"I tell you, yes; all, all wiped out. I tell you, expecting you daily, nightly, just as you used to be to her before you went away!"

The hands that had been gripped upon the tomb drew Felix Pasture forward to his knees upon the sodden ground. He knelt in prayer; a very aged man, bowed beneath grief that had been insupportable, crushed beneath joy he felt he could not bear. And David, standing above him, prayed with him: a young man, heavy these days past with dismay, uplifted now with happiness in being the instrument of such a happiness.

Felix Pasture made to rise. David put out his hand and drew him up. "I will go to her," Felix said; pressed David's hands a long space and turned to go. He turned again. "My sister?" he faltered.

"Your sister," David said, "has blamed you bitterly. But her love for your mother has been a love infinitely better than yours; and I believe absolutely that that love, seeing your mother's joy in your return to her, will wipe away her blame, even as your mother's recollection has

been wiped away. I believe that this will change her life, even as it will change your mother's life. Go quickly, man; God's blessing, which has brought you, with you!"

He watched him out of sight. He turned and went with swift, glad steps towards the vicarage, and with glad voice entering called. "Roddy! Roddy!"

Remembering how she had left him, fearing how he would return, astonished, Roddy came running to him. "David, whatever is it?"

"Roddy, the most amazing, the most glorious thing! Roddy, that old Mrs. Pasture's son——"

Excitedly he told her; triumphantly he ended. "Roddy, this wipes out all! This miracle, and I the means of it! Roddy, the first claim that I staked out here, *bonanza!* Oh, throwing up red gold and scarcely the soil scratched! Roddy!"

Himself, by what he was bringing to old Mrs. Pasture's heart, and so to David's the red gold thus thrown up, Felix Pasture, even while still and again at the meal Roddy had prepared for him David spoke eagerly of the glad miracle that had been done, was going up the Stone House lane. The sun had appeared, the bitter wind something abated. Old Mrs. Pasture, if ever sun was showing, must be out even if but for the fewest minutes, and now was out. The corner by the front door was sheltered, took what sunshine was given in these wintry days, shielded away the wind. She scarcely had been left by Lucydear, snugly rugged up in her snug chair, than the gate latch clicked and she, eager as ever at the sound, looked up; and he who entered, standing a moment, heard her cry, saw both arms come out, stretched both his arms, and ran to her on feet he felt could scarcely bear him.

"Mother! Mother!"

"Happy! Happy!"

He threw himself down upon the ground on his knees, put his arms about her, buried his face in her lap. "Mother! Mother!"

She fondled his grey hair as often when it had been flaxen she had fondled it. "My boy, my Happy, my dear, dear Happy! I knew you would come, Happy; I knew you would come."

"Mother! Mother!"

Red gold: but tempered steel was also there.

While yet David, thrown up by this most golden augury from fearful self to sanguine self, from infirmity of doubt to strength of decision, forgets dismay, calls up encouragement, disperses the bad start, assembles hopes for new, Miss Pasture fronts her brother in the sitting room.

They have not spoken yet. She has come round the corner of the house upon him still on his knees, his face upturned to his mother, his mother's hands holding his face, his arms around her; and she has struck her hand to her breast as though she had been stabbed there, and leant a space against the wall; then come to him; and he has stood up, and no word uttered; then gestured to him and he has followed her in here.

They both stand; she upright, he bowed.

"Well, you have come back?"

"Lucy — yes."

"Where have you been?"

He makes a feeble opening gesture with his hands. "Everywhere — around the world — America — Australia — broken, Lucy."

"What of that woman?"

"She left me, Lucy, immediately I had ——"

"Immediately you had robbed us for her?"

He bows his head.

"And took our money with her?"

"Lucy, I declare to you I took the money to use for all our benefits on a chance I was certain could not——"

"Liar! You still drink, I suppose?"

"No, Lucy."

"Have you got any money?"

"A very little."

She is silent, perhaps three minutes; her breathing, the sole sound heard, is terrible in its violence of inspiration and emission. She raves out suddenly, in a cry terrible to hear, "In name of all devils why have you come back?"

"Lucy, to Mother."

She cries again, "In devil's name — it is what you are, a devil — how did you dare?"

"Lucy, I never would have dared. I never had any intention of ever returning. Believe that, for God's sake, Lucy."

"Why, then, why?"

"I thought her dead. I came to the churchyard to see her grave. I heard she lived, Lucy. Lucy, I heard that she was longing for me."

"What fiend of hell told that to you?"

"A clergyman."

"A clergyman!"

"A clergyman in the church there. There had just been a funeral service——"

"I would to God," she cried, "it had been his! How dared you, even then?"

"Lucy, I never would have dared, even then. I told him that I would not. Believe me, Lucy, that I told him."

"Well, then?"

"He told me that Mother had forgotten — that was why I came."

She threw up her arms, her fists clenched. "Ah!"

Presently she said, "Listen to this. You shall stay here,

I suppose. You can earn your keep here. You can work for me here as you have forced me all my life to work because of you. Listen to this. You shall do what I want and live as I say. If ever you disobey me, if ever you offend me in the slightest, the very smallest degree, by a look, by a word, by a deed — at that moment I tell Mother what she has forgotten. You understand me?"

"I understand, Lucy."

"Get from my sight."

When he had gone, she put up her arms as she had thrown them up before, but slowly now, every muscle constricted in the violence of her emotion. "Ah!" she cried again. "Ah, that man!" She went then to a table and sat to a letter.

The letter was to David and came to him while, extraordinarily uplifted, he paced his study, the vigour of his happiness in this miraculous mining of his claim still on him. He had been set back; well, from that setback he would advance anew! The Admiral's death had seemed to cut his all away; why should it? A little economy, a little pluck, work here to do, his first vicariate, and not here long, the Bishop's goodwill still before him, and to be earned and justified by fine work here! That scene with Pelham Heritage, that prophecy; what of it? Pelham Heritage should be the third claim he would stake! Yes, fine! Look at the Banjo claim, look, look at this miracle of the Pasture claim! "Charge once more then —— !"

It was in the moment of repeating those lines which, as he had told Mr. Custom, were his most stirring inspiration, and at the height of the elevation they always gave him, that the letter was brought in to him by Philippa; and, eagerly in his eager mood, he tore it quickly open to read it.

It had no preamble.

What right had you to send my brother here? What right had you to tell him my mother had forgotten his crime? But for your vile interference he never would have dared to darken these doors. He says so himself, and you know it. I took dislike to you from the moment I first saw you. Something warned me against you — but never of this. Play your organ! I never will set foot near your church again. I will do all in my power to make you regret you ever came here, all in my power to make you look back on the day you came here as the most bitter mistake of your life — L. P.

PART II

CHAPTER I

THE YACHT

A REFLECTION on life worth while making, because at once so trite and so impressive, so obvious and so little realised, is that the only thing that really matters to an individual, the consideration which outweighs all other considerations and by which he judges all considerations, is — himself.

This has a brutal sound, disruptive apparently of all that is humane or noble; but it is not brutal or opposed to any such. It is true of an entirely selfless character as patently it is true of a completely selfish. It must be so; the world could not go on otherwise. A man hears of a great calamity, by sea, in mine, by earthquake, involving loss of hundreds of lives, and he is profoundly moved by it; but he hears in the same moment that a water pipe has burst upstairs and there is no question which of the two disasters, the infinitely terrible or the infinitely absurd, is going to occupy the whole of his thoughts and activities for the next twenty minutes. A barometer records the pressure immediately about it; no one expects it to register the pressures registered by barometers higher, lower or far on either hand; and each of us is, primarily, a barometer, registering pressure as it touches us, not as the man next door is touched.

How, having registered them, we respond to considerations is another matter; there, being animate, we differ from the barometer which, inanimate, registers only. One man, witnessing a drowning, pulls off his coat and plunges in; another stays on the bank, hoping for the best. One, receiving an appeal, responds; another ignores. One, in Father Absolute's phrase, goes through life giving, another taking. All this happy difference in men is beside the point, not germane to the case stated. The reflection in abstract is that every individual must, precisely because he is individual, judge all considerations from the consideration which is his sole self; and the observation arising from it is how vastly different to the persons actually concerned are the operations which to another are merely — news.

Take Medwyn Paradise's airy glinting over the surface of matters that have been tunnelling five years deep into certain lives.

Medwyn Paradise has a large establishment for a bachelor, six indoor servants, two guest suites, a library as well as a study (he is a man of some scholarship) a music room with dance floor as well as a billiard room (his tastes are musical) — that sort of ménage; and his guest chambers are never long unoccupied; his dining table seldom runs three consecutive nights without other legs beneath it additional to his own. He is not only a travelled but a regularly travelling man; he has quite distinguished people, by no means only British, down to stay with him; *but,* as Miss Eider might say, he is himself quite undistinguished and his dinner parties and his little house parties invariably, and in some indefinable way, are rather flat little parties. Perambulation round elegant furniture galleries on very thick, very soft carpets and under convoy of a very superior showman, is,

rather than the genial atmosphere of a home and a host, the feeling given you by a visit to, or an evening with, Medwyn Paradise; or, in Banjo's phrasing of it, if that should be more illuminative, " Corks never seem to come out with a pop at old Paradise's; they seem to squirm out."

As to that, gossip is the stuff Medwyn Paradise best likes to circulate around his table; and gossip to be properly enjoyed is served as a vintage wine, never poured out with a head on it.

Here he is at the head of one of his little dinner parties, all the guests but one old friends of ours, first met at a hunt breakfast five years ago — a brace of Flogg-Wallopers, Sir Cropp and Quorn, who have come specially and solely to sample a new bin of port which he has just opened and who were to have brought Lady Flogg-Walloper with them but on arrival have announced with unusual garrulity, " Couldn't come! ", Mrs. Distaff, Miss Eider and Miss Trapper, and — the stranger — Mr. Distaff, who will hope earnestly that you may have heard of him as the author, seventeen years ago, of a travel volume entitled, " Lost in Lumpopo " and, whether you have or have not, will certainly find means of pressing an inscribed copy upon you very shortly after meeting you. Mr. Distaff, whose tragedy, according to Banjo, is that he was ever found in Lumpopo and brought back to his wife to be lost for the remainder of his days tied up to her in Great Gallop, published his tome at his own expense and ever since publication has been keeping up the sale by buying it at his own expense and bringing out new editions at his own expense. It is an impressive volume of about four and a half pounds avoirdupois, chiefly remarkable for the number of prefaces, in each of which the author reiterates, with growing testiness, that the Lumpopo of his adven-

tures is in the Belgian Congo and has nothing whatever to do with the Limpopo of the Transvaal; and remarkable, further, for the fact that the narrative trickles through its pages in four or five lines of very large type along the tops of dense chunks of notes, mainly quotations, in very small type; and Mr. Distaff himself is remarkable as being an extraordinarily thin man with an extraordinarily large Adam's apple which leaps wildly up whenever he tries to talk about his book and flops dejectedly down when, as always, he is silenced before he can begin; as now:

"A really curious coincidence—" Medwyn Paradise is saying. He pauses to speed the port in the direction of Sir Cropp and Quorn, who, this stage of the dinner having been reached, have permanently retired from all amenities of the occasion, appearing, crimson, to be asleep and only awaking with convulsive starts to glare ferociously at whoever may be delaying the decanter, to fill and sleep again. "A really curious coincidence—"; and up, leaping as it were into the gap caused by the handing of the wine, springs the Distaff Adam's apple.

"I narrate," says Mr. Distaff, "in my 'Lost in Lumpopo', a district of the Belgian Congo, which has, of course, nothing whatever to do with the Limpopo, the really astonishing coincidence of a native trader who——"

"I remember it perfectly well," says Medwyn Paradise who, in common with the company in general, has never read two consecutive pages of the book; and down flops the Adam's apple and Medwyn Paradise continues. "A really curious coincidence was that on the very morning of the news in the papers, a week ago to-day, that is to say, I had a letter from Jim Heritage, written from the yacht, posted at Mentone, warning

me not to be surprised if I heard that he had tumbled overboard and been drowned. I put —— "

"Oh, dear me," cries Miss Eider, her voice expressing fear of the worst and her ears, their informant being the prince of gossipers, expecting it and rather hoping for it, "you never are going to tell us that it was suicide?"

Medwyn Paradise glints. "Oh, no suggestion of such a thing; why should there be? Pelham Heritage has stepped into a tidy mess rather than a handsome fortune, by all accounts, but I would not say things were as bad as all that with poor Jim." He glints again, rather as if suggesting that he would not, however, dispute it if somebody else were to say it, and having established this, moves on. "No, when he wrote this letter he was joking on the subject of two kittens by the yacht's cat having been drowned over the side that day and warning me that things always go in threes —— "

"Oh, *that* kind of warning," declares Mrs. Distaff, plunging a cigarette end with nice sense of fitness into her finger bowl. "You know, I do think that joking on the subject of death is not only bad form but bad policy. Quite often, as in this instance —— "

"I tell a story in my 'Lost in Lumpopo'," breaks in Mr. Distaff, his apple, as it were, leaping up hopefully with another instance, "of a Lumpopo chief who the night before he —— "

"I recall it perfectly," says Miss Trapper, bringing down the Adam's apple with a thud. "Do please go on, Mr. Paradise."

Medwyn Paradise, glinting, goes on. He has done with the letter; he has laid across the dead man's grave the suggestion that suicide may possibly have been the cause of it; now he lays another wreath of the sort that his kind always have ready for the dead, or the living,

and this he prepares with that genial phrase, "Well, we are all friends here," which is as the spraying of scent over flowers that otherwise might seem to have a funny smell.

"Well, we are all friends here," says Medwyn Paradise, "and we all know what sort of a pair Jim Heritage and Bill Venture were, and what sort of larks any yachting party of theirs would be likely to be up to at that time of night. I suppose we all read between the lines of those newspaper stories of Venture sitting quietly on the gunnel and the boat heeling him over and Jim going after him. I haven't the least doubt there was some half-tipsy ragging going on and that they both went under like stones as the result of it. Poor old Jim, I know, could swim like an otter. No, you don't tell me!"

No, but you still would not believe it if you were told, you Medwyn Paradises and you Eiders and you Trappers and you Distaffs. Howsoever honourably a man may be acquitted of a charge, you always will glint your glints and shrug your shrugs and say that a case like that never would have been brought if there had not been *some* truth in it; or an accident like this happen if there had not been *some* better (which is to say worse) reason for it.

Never mind; that is, after all, just your, and the world's airy glinting over Jim Heritage's steam yacht, running through the night; dancing going on; a bit of a sea come up, causing her to roll a bit, which makes the dancing merrier; and Jim coming up from below; and a big roll just as he comes; and gay laughter at the roll; and the laughter split and stifled by a shout; and Jim just on deck as the shout is made; and his cry "Eh? Good God! Who? *Bill?*"; and his spring to the gunnel

and leap upon it and plunge from off it into the darkness and into the waters beneath the darkness and into the darkness that awaits him beyond the waters.

Miraculously in that inky vastness, the seas mightily bigger when amongst them than when laughed at from the yacht, he gets to Bill, grabbing him without knowing that he has come to him, brought to him as though the love between them had, in that crisis of their lives, stretched hands from one to other and drawn them into one. "Bill can't swim!" had been his immediate thought when "Bill Venture!" had been shouted up the deck; and Bill is drowning as he grabs him now.

"*Got* you, old man! All serene now, old man! Bill, don't hold me; for God's sake, don't hold me, old man! Let go, Bill, let *go!* Bill, I'll have to throttle you under if you won't let go. . . . Leave yourself to me. . . . Trust me, old man."

"All right . . . old man."

"Good old Bill. . . . Look, I want to get my hands under your shoulders . . . that's right . . . that's fine . . . where's that — yacht? . . . Are we in a fog or what? . . . Here's something . . . a grating, thank God. . . . Grab on to this, Bill. . . . Can you get on to it? No, hell, that's no good. . . . Try just getting your arms right over it. . . . That's good. . . That's fine. . . . How you feeling, Bill?"

"Pretty good . . . old man."

They can see the yacht's lights now, incredibly distant in so short a space, merged, at that distance and in that fog that must have been about and that is floating round them now, into a single light, incredibly dim, not always, as the seas harry them, in view. The yacht is being brought around in a huge circle before she lowers a boat. She has thrown out buoys and gratings. The buoys have no flares, the grating to which they cling is all that ever

reaches them, the boat does not find them, the yacht does not find them, no shouting reaches them, nor their shouts the searchers.

Well, they hang on till they can hang on no longer; that is all that is to be said of it. The trouble in slow drowning is not so much the strain of hanging on as, with increasing weariness, the increasing desire to give up the strain and slip away to rest.

While they are only a little weary ——

"Bill, I guess we are booked through all right, this time. No change."

"And no return tickets," agrees Bill grimly.

They gave a bit of a laugh.

While they still are not utterly weary ——

"Wonder whether they'll tell us whether Hourglass won to-day when we arrive?"

"Our blinking luck if he did," says Bill; and they have a shred of a laugh still.

When they are desperately weary ——

"What you thinking of, Jim?"

"Funny; that parson chap at Parva. . . . Wish I'd helped him, Bill, when Banjo asked."

"He cooked us properly, splitting that cocking business."

"Banjo swore it was that Pasture woman somehow made him give the game away."

"Well, he gave it, anyway."

"Well, I ought to ha' helped him, Bill."

Silence.

When they are weary to point of sleep ——

"Jim, pretty rotten, would you say, to start praying now when we're up against it?"

"Yes, pretty rotten, Bill. Best go through as we've run."

Silence.

"Jim!"

"Bill — Bill!"

Bill has let go, to go through; Jim clutches for him once, again; Jim goes through — as he has run.

"— *But,*" concludes Miss Eider, hurling a Mills bomb into the midst of the epitaph on Jim she has been pronouncing, "— *But* entirely without character, unprincipled, selfish to a degree."

"Well, he was a good friend of mine," Medwyn Paradise is now saying, "so naturally I must stick up for him;" and to demonstrate how valiantly he therefore always will defend his memory, "Of course there was that cock-fighting prosecution," he adds, digging up a scandal five years buried; "that was bad, I admit."

"It was atrocious," declares Mrs. Distaff, driving a cigarette end into her dessert plate, as if it were the atrocity in question and she were visiting judgment upon it. "It made me, the way the sensational newspapers took it up and made a scandal of the day of it, making out that all of us down here were cock-fighting and bull-baiting and goodness knows what, ashamed to belong to the countryside. He ought never to have been forgiven for it."

"I record in my 'Lost in Lumpopo'," interjects Mr. Distaff, "a Congo form of cock-fighting in which ——"

"I read it with great interest," declares Medwyn Paradise, firmly shutting it back into its archives. "As to forgiving, Jim never forgave that Ashton Parva vicar for his share in the business. I was reminded of that by happening to run into the chap as I was coming back from Westonbury this afternoon. It occurred to me that I had never seen him, not to speak to, since, coming

back from hunting with Jim Heritage one day not long after the cock-fighting row, we passed him on the road and Jim told me he would see him — well, somewhere else —before he would do anything for him; and that was ages ago. Extraordinary how one can live years within a few miles of a man and hardly know he exists."

"But I believe hardly any one does know he exists," asserts Miss Eider; "a well-meaning young man and all that, I believe, *but* far from a success in his parish. Was Jim Heritage going to do something for him then?"

"Oh, nothing particular," says Medwyn Paradise indifferently. "Just some little trifle that the poor old Admiral was to have done, I believe. Banjo Heritage interested Jim in the chap, so far as I remember, and then this cock-fighting business happened, and Jim blamed the parson — something like that; I really forget, nothing of any moment."

CHAPTER II

THE COCKPIT

No, nothing of any moment to you, Medwyn Paradise, or to any of us; it is, as has been said, only in proportion as things touch ourselves that they become of actual moment to us; but there was Miss Pasture, not many weeks after Felix had come home, extracting it from Mr. Glumday, who had it from Mrs. Glumday, who, considering she never was one to peep and pry, heard and saw an astonishing amount of what went on at the vicarage, that the interest of Piers Castle was being directed upon the new vicar, bringing light there to what had been much darkness, and setting her mind at once to extinguishing that light.

"I will do all in my power to make you regret you ever came here; all in my power to make you look back upon the day you came here as the most bitter mistake of your life."

With a satisfaction terrible in its malignity she had noted, even while the words were but a few days off her pen that, without action of hers, the vicar already was likely to have regrets. From Mrs. Keepsake, wife of that frightened little vicar of Malford Regis, whose astonishing acrobatics at St. George's she had witnessed, she learnt, without details, that Pelham Heritage, because he had been given some great offence by the new vicar of Parva, was, after all, continuing attendance at her husband's church. Given offence to Pelham Heritage! That would jar the man! He soon would find, even

as perhaps he had already found, that he could ill afford to incur displeasure of a man of Pelham Heritage's position in the parish. From village gossip, drifted down from manor-kitchen sources, she was able to discover that apparently the man had come here largely dependent on the late Admiral's good will — and by Fate had been forced with his own hands to bury that good will. That would shake him!

Her satisfaction in both those items of news was immense. Jarred, shaken thus already; twice hit, by loss of Admiral and by antipathy of Pelham Heritage, and scarcely come here; and all this without finger of her own turned to throw him down! Satisfactory; more than satisfactory; but Miss Pasture had but to lift her eyes to her brother, following the drudgery to which she put him about her chicken runs, or (worse poisoning her blood) receiving her mother's devoted tenderness, to know that satisfaction in David Quest's undoing by fortuitous processes was not enough to salve the hurt that he had done her. Herself must speed his wrecking; and she was able to do it, she found, along both the underminings that had already been begun — along the rupture with Pelham, along the line of cutting away the props that seemed likely to come from Piers Castle to take the place of those collapsed by the death of the Admiral.

Following the news brought her by Mrs. Keepsake, she placed herself to know the matter in greater detail from Pelham himself by meeting him and telling him, without giving him the reason, that she had given up her place as organist at Parva church. He told her in reply that he himself had altered his intention of attending the church, and told her why — the interview in the vestry and its upshot.

She was very glad she had not given her reason for

leaving the organ. "Now that you have told me this, Mr. Heritage," she said, "I feel myself able to tell you why it is that I have decided to give up the organ there after all these years. My reason was the same as your own reason for feeling that you cannot worship there, this extraordinary action of his in regard to Mr. Banjo. Forgive me for saying it of one who is your relation. I would not have told you had you not first ——"

Pelham took the lie as one takes a thing prophesied and expected. "I am not surprised," he said. "I warned the man of this. Your withdrawal from his church will be very generally followed;" and at that her bitterness against David Quest rejoiced within her. Yes, others should follow this good beginning. She would see to that! And she saw herself moving among the cottages, dropping a word here and a word there. "You have heard, I expect, that I am no longer playing the organ at the church? . . . Oh, I thought every one knew that . . . the new vicar . . . young Mr. Heritage. . . . You remember that disgraceful scene when he had to be turned out of Sunday morning service . . . and now, you will scarcely believe me when I tell you . . . actually the Communion service. . . . Oh, yes, it is true. . . . Once already and apparently regularly in future. . . . Of course, it is a matter for every one to decide for himself or for herself. . . . I would not attempt to influence any one . . . some people do not feel very deeply on these matters . . . for my own part. . . . Mr. Pelham Heritage too. . . . Oh, yes, Mr. Pelham will not enter the church. . . ."

The phrases flowed warmly through her mind. They very soon were running at every opportunity from her lips. The village was buzzing with excitement at the return of "that wicked old brother" of hers, of whom so much had been heard for so many years. It welcomed

her visits. It relished enormously the new subject for gossip which her visits brought. It loved to find itself much scandalised by what she told them. For years it had taken no sort of interest in its church; it was exciting now to have in it an interest which at the same time gave excuse on grounds of outraged principles for not attending it.

The single bell, for daily service, tolled by the new vicar himself, from providing an astonishment at such ideas became a cause of mock. Him ringing away like that at this hour of a weekday morning and not able to get as many even as that old Mr. Pewish of a Sunday!

So it was; and the man who, suffering it, sounded that bell for deafened ears; who preached on Sundays to congregations scant as and scanter than that "nine all told" of which, with his umbrella swinging in ardent prospect of the change that he would make, he had spoken to Mr. Custom; who passed the padlocked manor gates that were to have been his open doors; who in few weeks found himself living, as Medwyn Paradise airily had said, within brief distance of people who seemed not to know that he existed, welcomed with new and eager hope the interest and friendship that, through words to Jim Heritage from Banjo, suddenly began to come to the vicarage from Piers.

One of the castle cars began coming over to take Roddy, her time approaching, and the children for drives; presents of game and fruit and vegetables came over; on more than one occasion, when Jim had felt his house party to be sufficiently respectable, the vicarage family were fetched over to lunch; most genially and practically of all, Jim spoke one day of being about to write to Mr. Custom because he had an idea (so he put it to David)

that the living was not getting the full income that it should. "I don't know anything about these dashed things, Vicar; Bill Venture is supposed to be my agent and he knows less. But I am going to have old Custom look into it next time I am writing to him. Oh, don't thank me, my dear chap. It's just business, and ain't bin done yet, anyway!"

Nor ever was done. Miss Pasture, hearing of these benefits and friendlinesses through the Mrs. Glumday-Mr. Glumday loud-speaker, looked into them before ever, by forgetful Jim Heritage, Mr. Custom was bidden to look into the vicar's stipend. Things were brightening up for the man, were they! He was being patronised by the well-to-do, was he! Miss Pasture was able at first to do no more in the situation, nor for that matter thought to do more, than to use the vicarage-castle friendship as further stiffening of the village's religious susceptibilities against the vicar. Every honest home knew what sort of a place Piers Castle was; no self-respecting cottager (especially whose daughters had been refused situation there or been dismissed from it) would think of allowing girls to take service there, even if they begged on bended knees to go; and out of this Miss Pasture had material easy to her hand. "So our vicar visits at Piers, does he? The car frequently over here taking them for drives, is it? Well, well, it might have been expected, I am bound to say; but scarcely the sort of clergyman whose church one wishes to attend, don't you agree?"

Easy — and efficacious.

But there came to her through Mr. Glumday, who had it from a groom at the castle, rumors of a cock-fighting pit there; and she set her hard mouth at the plan that came suddenly into her head, then put herself to try it out, and its abundant development caused her to set her lips again, triumphantly. She commanded

her brother to get all he could out of Mr. Glumday then, quickened by what, thus commanded, he brought her, to execute some eavesdropping in bar parlours over in Laversham, named by Glumday, when (as was his task) he took the eggs into market. Her way with Felix merely was to command, never to give reasons or extenuations, be the order cleaning out a hen house, going an errand, or a mission seemingly so strange as this. Her instrument over him, dared he ever protest, flag, appear unwilling, merely was a question, cracked like a whip, thrust at him like a spear: "Do you want me to tell Mother the truth about you?"

The man with abject eyes dropped them always at that and went about her bidding.

He was able from this source and that to bring her little enough about the cock-fighting; the dangerous secret was well kept; but he brought her sufficient for her purpose and she developed it. "I have altered what I ordered you about that Mr. Quest. You may know him. Go to his church next Sunday. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Lucy."

After that was: "You may let him take you up, although at first I forbade you. Respond to whatever rubbishing friendship he may offer you. If he asks you down there, tell me and I will give you permission to go. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Lucy."

After that: "Listen to this. When you see Mr. Quest to-day you are to tell him everything, every single thing you have told me, about this cock-fighting at Piers. Do you understand?"

He ventures wonderingly: "About the cock-fighting, Lucy?"

"How dare you answer me? Do what you are told."

When she was assured that she had been obeyed, "Come

in here. Write down on that sheet of paper what I am going to tell you. Address this envelope first.

To the Chief Inspector,
Police Station,
Laversham.

"Now write on the paper.

"If you wish to confirm the rumours of cock-fighting being carried on at Piers, go to Ashton Parva vicarage and ask the Reverend Mr. Quest if he knows anything about it. He does and he can tell you enough to enable you to make a raid that will catch Sir James and the others redhanded.

— Lover of Animals.

"Have you got that? Put it in the envelope, seal it, don't stamp it, post it as soon as you get into Laversham this morning."

That poor abject man fumbles the paper nervously. "Lucy — Lucy, is this going to make trouble for the vicar?"

"How dare you ask me questions? Do as you are told."

"Lucy, Sir James is being very good to Mr. Quest."

"Seal that letter."

He fumbles the paper into the envelope. "Lucy, Mr. Quest has been very, very kind to me."

She gives the sound of a laugh. "Now you are repaying his kindness. Stick the envelope."

He puts out towards her hands that tremble. "Lucy, I do beg you. Lucy, I do implore you ——"

"Listen to me. You will tell me when you come back this evening that you have posted that letter. I shall soon know if you have or not. If you have not, I shall

tell Mother what she has forgotten about you. You understand me?"

"Yes, Lucy."

He seals the letter and shambles past her from the room.

The police raid is made; the police-court proceedings follow; counsel retained for Sir James elicits from the police witnesses that action was taken as a result of information obtained from the vicar of Ashton Parva. The birds are confiscated, the cock-fighting is forever over; and Sir James, who cares not tuppence for the scandal but very much indeed for the loss of his sport and the way in which he feels he has been cherishing a viper in his bosom, says heatedly to Banjo, "Well, so much for your parson pal, Banjo; a dirty trick; bid him good-bye with my compliments, will you, and to hell with the same."

And on the day of the hearing of the summonses and of the conviction and of the words to Banjo, the man child expected of Roddy is born in the vicarage.

CHAPTER III

THE RAILWAY CARRIAGE

"YES, I met that Parva vicar chap to-day as I was coming back from Westonbury," Medwyn Paradise (picked up at his table where we left him) now is saying. "He was shoved into my carriage with a third-class ticket by the guard because the train was crammed with a football crowd, some local cup tie or other; and the guard, the way he shepherded him in and then locked the door on us, gave me the impression of feeling rather sorry for him because he was soaking wet — a brute of a day all day in Westonbury — and certainly looked a sick horse, shivering when he got in and while he first sat there, like a chap with ague. It ——"

"I hazard the opinion about ague in my 'Lost in Lumpopo'," shoots in Mr. Distaff, "that the basic cause ——"

"I remember it perfectly," says Medwyn Paradise; "very sound, very sound," and continues: "We got into conversation of a sort, not a chatty individual by any means, and it appeared from what he told me that he had just taken the knock pretty badly by a visit to the Bishop about some living that had just fallen vacant, Fontwych, I think it was; I wasn't listening very closely at the moment, was reading the specification of my new Rolls car which is what I had been into Westonbury about; Fontwych, or it might have been Fillbury, something with an F, it really doesn't matter; taken the knock about it pretty badly, anyway, because it seems, from what he said, that he thought it was going to be offered him by our old Bishop, the one who was moved

on from Westonbury to Eastminster last year, you remember, and found that this new Bishop, so to speak, thought not."

Medwyn Paradise permits himself a little laugh at this pleasantry and his ladies permit themselves the like; and, encouraged, he proceeds to enlargen it. "A case, I rather gathered, of the very old story of the new Pharaoh knowing not Joseph."

Quorn Flogg-Walloper, starting out of sleep, catches the last words here and bursts into surprising volubility: "Ha! What Joseph is that?" he demands, red, blinking, suspicious.

Medwyn Paradise glints at his following. "Had some job in Egypt, I fancy," he glints; "something in the administration service, I believe."

"Does he hunt?" barks Sir Cropp, aroused by the words of his kennel companion and giving tongue, crimson, with enormous ferocity.

"I should say not," judges Medwyn Paradise, glinting and receiving batteries of glints in exchange. "I should imagine not. He would be a fairly old man by now, I imagine."

"About four or five thousand years old or more," he adds under his breath to his circle; but need not have taken the precaution, for the Flogg-Wallopers, having torn their prey out of all probability of ever daring to rival them in the saddle, are returned satisfied, newly crimsoned with the heat of the chase, to their port and their slumber.

The glinters enjoy the refreshment of a little well-made mirth and, thereafter, are less disposed even than before (when they were not in the least disposed) to give more than gossipy interest to the case of a man who has that day taken the knock pretty badly, who looked a sick horse, and who sat, soaking wet, shivering as with an ague in a first-class carriage with a third-class ticket — the price of which he has fearfully staked on a personal reminder to

the new Bishop, much as a shipwrecked castaway might risk a precious morsel to bait a hook, and see it go and nothing gained, nothing but deeper knowledge of the straits that he is in.

"He is a funny sort of chap," Medwyn Paradise presently is airily going on. "I don't wonder he is the reverse of popular down there in Parva."

"*Is* he funny?" questions Mrs. Distaff, screwing the nose of a cigarette into her dessert plate, as if teaching it to dare to be funny. "Funny in what way?"

"Why, manners, appearance, that sort of thing," pronounces Medwyn Paradise. "I thought him infernally rude to me at the end, when he got out at Kington Berger and left me, or mad; I will tell you about that in a moment. But I think to begin with, that a man in the position of a vicar, never mind how remote his parish or rural his community, ought to pay some regard to his personal appearance, you know."

Up with a bound leaps the Distaff Adam's apple. "I agree," affirms Mr. Distaff, "absolutely. I relate in my 'Lost in Lumpopo' the instance of a German storekeeper who, although——"

"Quite," agrees Medwyn Paradise, "quite; a very striking example," and, while the Adam's apple dolefully descends, earnestly continues: "I do feel rather that a man advertises loss of self-respect when he goes about dressed, as this man was, in a coat frayed at the cuffs and shabby to a degree, collar not too clean — that was the rain perhaps, but not all rain it struck me — boots with laces broken and knotted, and, when he put a foot up on his knee, showing the sole pretty well through to the sock. Little points like that, you know. I think they tell, you know."

"I think so decidedly," agrees Miss Trapper. "I remember a connection of mine, now dead, swallowed by a shark, poor young fellow, who, when positively alone on a Samoan trading station, one of the Winkworth Trappers,

Sir John Winkworth Trapper's youngest boy, *always* dressed for dinner."

"Exactly," says Medwyn Paradise. "Even if a man is not too well off, clean linen, well-kept clothes, well-found boots, trifles like that are nothing in money but volumes in self-respect; and for that matter, this Quest's little boy that he had with him was thoroughly well waterproofed and mufflered and shod, so it was no excuse of the money kind."

"Little boy?" inquires Miss Eider. "Has he a boy? I thought I remember hearing two little girls only?"

"When he first came only two, I believe," asserts Mrs. Distaff. "By now more than another I would not be at all surprised. Everybody knows what clergyman's families are."

"Oh, notorious, of course," agrees Medwyn Paradise. "This little chap certainly would have been born since the man came to Parva, not more than four or five, I imagine, and the father apparently crazy with devotion to him, carried on in rather an absurd way, I thought, took him in his arms when the little beggar fell asleep and rocked him and sort of hungered over him as though a pack of wolves were about and he was shielding him from them. Occurred to me that if he had shielded him from coming out in such a ghastly day it would have been more to the point. I rather think he saw that in my eye too, because he took opportunity to tell me that he and the kid were never apart —'Small David', as he called him. 'Small David and Big David', as he kept saying to the child."

"I would judge from that," thrusts in Mr. Distaff, exhibiting the astounding perspicacity found in some authors, and, staggered by his own astuteness, forgetting for a moment his incarceration in Lumpopo, "I would judge from that that his own name is David."

"Very probable," agrees Medwyn Paradise, "and a not

over-polite David or a slightly mad one, I had reason to think, because of the extraordinary remark he made, as I was telling you, as he got out at Magna."

This excites the ladies. "Yes, do tell us!"; and Medwyn Paradise, glinting, tells.

"Why, we had not spoken for half an hour; I had been lying back with my fur coat up to my eyes, and jolly glad I had brought it, and smoking a cigar, half asleep, and noticing no more of him than the way he was sitting bolt upright with the kid asleep on his lap and staring straight before him, rather as if he were watching a wolf that was stalking him; and then the station came and he got up, still carrying the kid, and I nodded to him and would have opened the door for him, but he got his hand to it first, kid and all; and I was glad enough I hadn't afterwards, because I said to him in the friendliest way, 'Ah, all change here for Parva, eh? Not much change ever there, though, I suppose? What do you find to do with yourself down there?'

"Nothing very unfriendly about that, was there?" Medwyn Paradise pauses in his narrative to inquire.

"Nothing whatever," asserts Mrs. Distaff. "On the contrary!"

"He seemed to think there was. He glared down on me, positively glared down over the kid, shivering again, no doubt, through the nip from the open door, and 'What am I doing down there?' he sort of rasped, and stopped, and had his mouth working. 'Holding the fort!' he bawled out savagely, just like that—'Holding the fort!'

"'Fort? What fort?' I asked.

"'God's fort!' he cried out, and stepped down, and off he went into the night. Jolly, eh? Mad, do you think?"

"Extraordinary!" cry the ladies.

CHAPTER IV

THE CAR

And they kept reaffirming how extraordinary it was; and Medwyn Paradise thrice repeats the genial remark of his that led up to it; and at the third repetition slides away to new glinting ground on that portion of the genial remark relative to the little change ever taking place at Parva. "Not but what," says he, glinting, "there isn't quite a change coming there with Pelham Heritage — Sir Pelham, eh? — clearing out to Piers."

"Oh, you think he will go to Piers at once, do you?" demands Miss Eider. "I would have thought that, devoted as he is to Great House ——"

"At once, if not sooner," affirms Medwyn Paradise, and gets down so low under his eyebrows and sends up from beneath them so glittering a glint, that the ladies are assured some especial meaning lurks in his words, and are themselves possessed of sufficient glints to give him an attractive lead towards revealing it.

"Well, I am sure," leads Miss Trapper, "that Mrs. Heritage — Lady Heritage — will be as glad to go as quickly as you think he will be."

"*Are* you?" challenges Medwyn Paradise and flashes a glint like the flick of a heliograph and repeats the challenge. "*Are* you?"

Delicious!

"Well, I don't know what you know, of course," protests Miss Trapper, who, if indeed she does not, feels that she could guess at it pretty closely; "but I do know

that Lady Heritage, all the time she has been Mrs. Heritage, has given every one the impression that she is locked up in the place and bored to death with it."

"*Is* she?" challenges Medwyn Paradise.

Rapturous!

Every one except Mr. Distaff, who is lost in Lumpopo, and Sir Cropp and Quorn, who are lost in port, feels that thin ice is about and waits breathlessly for some one to adventure upon it; and Miss Eider, feeling no doubt that if it will stand a Mills bomb it will stand anything, very obligingly comes along with one. "A truly sweet-natured girl," she says, "a quite too charming manner and disposition and of course exquisitely beautiful *but* far from having been since she came here all that Sir Pelham would have her be, I am inclined to think."

No dismay in the form of dissent being evinced at the explosion, there is a general feeling that the ice will bear and Miss Trapper skims out upon it. "Oh, it is common knowledge, I suppose," she skims, "that there has been a little trouble there from time to time."

"Pelham's friends not her friends, as I have always understood," says Mrs. Distaff, gliding with careful carelessness towards the ice marked "Dangerous."

"Or her friends his?" glints Medwyn Paradise, swooping boldly over the very spot and rewarded for his daring by a pressing forward of everybody to join him and to watch him.

"Now I knew perfectly well," declares Miss Trapper, pressing furthest, "that you had some meaning in your questioning it just now, when I said that Lady Heritage would be glad to leave Great House, and this is it, isn't it?"

"Why, certainly it is," agrees Medwyn Paradise, "but for goodness' sake, don't try to put me into the position of making a mystery of it. Everybody knows that Mrs. —

that Lady Heritage and our friend Banjo are good friends; and everybody knows that Banjo and our friend Pelham are good enemies. There is no mystery about that, is there?"

"Oh, not in the least!" chorus all the ladies, shedding the imputation with purity of mind equal to Medwyn Paradise's own; and "Why ever should there be!" inquires Mrs. Distaff, casting the imputation away with greater purity yet.

"Why ever indeed?" agrees Medwyn Paradise. "They are relations, brother and sister-in-law to all intents and purposes, and the most natural thing in the world for them to be friendly. I only made my little sally about Lady Heritage not being so anxious to get away from Great House as her husband because it is, of course, an amusing situation that the one thing that ever has irked Heritage at Great House is having Banjo at his gates, and that the one attribute of Great House that any one has ever seen Lady Heritage display any interest in is, again, the Banjo at the gates."

"The story was, of course," says Miss Eider, "that Sir Pelham forbade her ever to meet him."

"Well, that was Lady Flogg-Walloper's story, and she said she had it from Banjo, who ought to know. But you remember how Lady Flogg-Walloper herself spiked that forbiddance, if really it ever was made. She tackled Pelham with it, and you can imagine perfectly well how he would deny it, as he did, even if it was true. If there is one thing on earth Pelham will avoid like death, it is having himself talked about; and you bet he wasn't going to give Lady Flogg-Walloper or any one else the chance of starting the hare that his relations with his wife were on footing of forbidding her to do this, that, and the other. He had been close enough to that already with Lady Flogg-Walloper accusing him, at the same genial interview, of being the cause of his wife not hunting——"

"And then they went abroad," says Miss Trapper. "I remember it very well, almost immediately after they had arrived here."

"And have wintered abroad ever since," glints Medwyn Paradise, "which, having regard to the fact that Heritage never spent two consecutive months away from Great House before he married, and that his wife, when I first called there, told me herself that she never wanted to spend a day out of England again all her life, really *is* rather funny."

He glints as though to show how secretly funny also it may be, and glinting continues. "Of course, in any case it would be next to impossible to prevent two people running into one another in a place like this; London would be different — but here! You cannot avoid meeting a man who lives practically at your front door and who shares your village street for one thing; and for another, though Pelham doesn't precisely make chums of the hunting set where Banjo would most likely be met, he is much too big a stickler for the proprieties to prevent his wife from returning calls, to say nothing of the borderline people like my humble self with whom he is affable enough and who have Banjo also on their visiting lists. Oh, Lady Heritage and Banjo have had to meet, of course, and Pelham knows they meet, of course; but there is no 'of course' attaching to his liking of their meeting. I happen to know that!"

The glint with which he announces that he knows this invites question "how"; and it is put; and glinting he tells it.

"A not unfunny incident; my chauffeur had it from Pelham's chauffeur and gave it to me only a day or two ago, as a result of our passing them in their car and my remarking to him that the Heritages were the only people about here who never drive themselves and apparently don't know how. 'Ah, Lady Heritage can, sir,' he said, and

then told me this. It happened a week ago, the very day before the news that made her Lady Heritage was in the papers, as a matter of fact. They had been out Calshott way, paying a call, and had stopped for the view on Calshott hill — Lady Heritage is crazy to look at the sea whenever there is a chance, apparently — and when they came to go on the engine had stopped and the self-starter would not function, and the chauffeur had to get down to swing the handle. He was careless with it, it appeared, and it kicked and sprained his wrist and thumb so badly that he could scarcely sit for pain, let alone drive. So there they were stuck, you understand, twenty miles from home, and Pelham ready to get in a mighty fume about it, when Lady Heritage announced that she could drive and swung the handle and took the wheel and did. The chauffeur was surprised enough, and Pelham, apparently, much more so. He didn't believe she could drive until she actually had the car running and then he said, 'But whoever taught you to drive?' 'Banjo taught me,' she said; and according to my chauffeur's version of their chauffeur's version, Pelham took it like a smack in the eye, never spoke another word all the way home, and when they arrived got out and went straight into the house without a sound, leaving her to garage the bus. 'Sir Pelham didn't seem to like it at all,' was the way my chauffeur introduced this part of the story; and though, of course, I made no comment, I could see that Pelham's chauffeur knew there was something in the wind and had given it to my man with that flavour. Extraordinary how that class of person gossips, isn't it?"

"Disgusting," said Mrs. Distaff. "Horrible people. But Mr. Paradise, that certainly does show how Sir Pelham regards the Banjo friendship——"

"And how, don't you think, Lady Heritage does?" suggests Medwyn Paradise; and he gets so low under his eyebrows, and glints so suggestively from beneath them,

that all the glinters glint at one another amain; and the dazzling brilliancy of it seems good opportunity for ending the intellectual conversation at, so to speak, its zenith; and Mrs. Distaff asks, "Well, we will leave you, shall we?" and leads the withdrawal of the ladies; and Medwyn Paradise, holding the door for them, gives them "Yes, not unfunny, was it?"; and they pass into the drawing-room; and the five years that they have skimmed for us may here perhaps be permitted to pass with them.

PART III

CHAPTER I

OF A WOLF: OF A CRUSADE: OF DAWN

Into the picture comes Father Absolute; not immediately to play active part in it, but to be used, as Banjo was fond of using his dictionary, to give closer understanding of a word — Dawn; which is here a person, this child called Dawn, child no longer.

David Quest opens the dictionary for us. David, on the outward portion of that visit to the Bishop at Westonbury, the return half of which had companioned him with Medwyn Paradise, had read in a newspaper intelligence of new activities of Father Absolute which, greatly surprising and interesting him as he read it, would have caused a long letter from him to his old chief had his interview with the Bishop's chaplain — the Bishop had been from home — not brought him on his homeward journey, hugging, as Medwyn Paradise had observed, Small David on his lap with arms the frayed coat sleeves of which had earned the Paradise disapproval, and staring before him across the child, as if, as Medwyn Paradise had noted, he were watching a wolf.

He was! That wolf, whose names were poverty, despair, frustration of endeavour, decay of hope, blackness of outlook, isolation of surroundings, multiformity of injurious circumstance; which had nibbled his coat cuffs, scarred his face, gnawed his heart, impoverished his children's upbringing, had, in the damp, cavernous vicarage that was its lair, last year torn Roddy down with pneumonia and so dogged her recovery that, prey of the wolf as David was, prey of all omens, fears, that were its brood, his over-

wrought nerves often bettered his control of himself in these dismays. He had outbursts of anger at those, the residential people, who ignored him, at those, the villagers, who stood bovinely indifferent to him. He had added nothing to his popularity by such outbursts as when, on a day during Roddy's illness, sick with fears, alive for omens, he had, in Mr. Drizzle's words, hounded that digger of nice graves from the vicarage garden "like one of them there All Satan dogs after a rent collector."

That wolf, dogging him by day and night — in the prospects of his children; from the empty pews of his church; in the irresponsiveness of the village street as he walked along it; in his lonely walks as, exercising or district visiting, he trudged the countryside; around his bed, eyes shining in the darkness, as he passed his restless nights; home with him as he came back to report to Roddy the results of his interview with his Bishop's chaplain — "Fontwych settled some time ago; 'I must see for myself, of course, that the Bishop, with claims, not to say objects, of his own upon him, cannot be expected to take over all his predecessors' obligations'" — that wolf crouched by him very menacingly in the days that immediately followed, and had him in no mind to write to Father Absolute the eager, questioning, gossipy letter which, in happier circumstances, the hearing of these new activities of his old chief would have aroused him to write. He felt he could not write to Father Absolute; and the reason was the same as gradually had caused him to cease correspondence with all his friends. What had he to tell? He had nothing to tell but failure, but fears, but disappointments, but privations, dismays, despondency. If he could have written, "I am doing ——", "I am making ——", "I am establishing ——"; if he could have begun sentences thus, how eagerly his pen would have raced along them! How often, when first coming to Parva, he had constructed and visioned

such letters! But his news to his friends could only be so much the negation and reverse of all these that, at once hating to expose his condition to another and fearing to admit it, in cold pen and ink, to himself, he had ceased writing to his friends. "One long whine," he once had said, on reading over such a letter after writing it; "I will wait till things are better"; and had torn it up, a proud man who would hide humiliations until, conquered, he could laugh at them. "Black! Black!" he another time had muttered, pausing in midst of what he perceived to be a catalogue of the array against him; "I will wait till it breaks a bit," and he had torn that up, a man who would not commit himself above his own signature to judgment that yet might be, must be, averted.

But the years had proceeded and things had not bettered; session had passed to session, and still the judgment stood; assize to assize and blacker stood the count against him.

No, he could not write a letter to Father Absolute; but his old chief was presented to him by that chance-read newspaper paragraph as planning a new voyage; and he had the wish very strongly to send a hail aboard; and the thought with it that if he could get Father Absolute, as it were, to write first, he could reply on the subject of his old chief's affairs and hint only at his own; and his message therefore took the form merely of a postcard on which he wrote, smiling to think how Father Absolute would smile, just Wordsworth's line and nothing more: "What, are you stepping Westward?"

Father Absolute smiled appreciatively and wrote back smilingly. "Yes, David, stepping Westward! How apposite, how witty, neat, your use of that quotation! Yes, David, leaving the East End for the West End, the settlement for the squares, the dazing darkness here for the darkening dazzle there, the lusty rascals here for the light lads and lassies there, the fullness of misery here for the

misery of emptiness there, the cry of stumbling generations here for the cry of rising (sinking) generations there! Yes, David, stepping Westward, and up and down and all about the length and breadth of England, wherever people will hear me and especially — bless 'em! — where they won't hear me and try to throw me out. Yes, David, the old dog on a new trail, making the devil skip in a new place, showing him up and hunting him down and keeping him on the run — at my time of life!

"You will laugh, you fighting, fit young David, at the likes of me turning out at this time of day and thinking I can hold my own and do my bit with the likes of you; but that's just it, David; I have suddenly realised that it is high time I did turn out again and do a job of work for Jesus Christ His sake. Things are going too easily here; I have oiled the wheels too well, got the engine running too perfectly. There is nothing for me to do here now that Father Tempest can't do better — nothing but look complacently on and think what a fine fellow I am and how well I have organised everything and grow fat and soft thinking it. Wherefore 'Out, man!' says I to myself. 'Gird up your loins, take up your carpetbag and goloshes and umbrella, chuck your soft job and good bed and nice meals and regular income and get out where you've got nowhere to go and where nobody wants you and *do* something! Get a move on, man! Leave the lightships you have anchored here and go out and do a bit of rescuing where folks, young folks, are drowning fast, and where you have got to take your coat off and jump in and swim for it. Out, man!'"

Thus in his familiar, breezy style, written just as he would have spoken it, the opening of his letter — this old man of eighty who, with a life's devoted work behind him, must needs start life again, because a new cry for rescue had come to him, a cry that rose Westward in London,

up and down and all across the length and breadth of England. It was the cry of youth, his letter went on to explain; of modern youth, of post-war youth, of those young people of to-day whose manners, whose morals, whose intolerance of the old virtues, of the old restraints, the old obedience, the old respect for parents and self-respect, were the disgust and outrage of their elders.

"David," he wrote, "I know well how painful all these modern tendencies of their daughters and their sons are to parents, how abominable and infuriating to all the older school; but, David, the case of these young moderns is not reprehensible; it is pathetic. They have no background, David; that is their trouble, that is the reason of their tendencies, that is their excuse for them. No background, David —nothing by which to judge the present except the present's self; no background—no sense of values, of standards, of perspective, except the value, standard, colour of the thing they have in hand. Pathetic, David! Does a child in the nursery who has never seen gold value gold? Can a young creature freshly bounding into life judge life? Pathetic, David! They prate, poor young souls, of their modern heroes, worship their new gods, and sicken and enrage us who knew the gods and giants of aforetime; but, David, *they* never knew them; they only know to-day's. Pathetic, David! We ancients marvel at the marvels of the age, our wireless, our aeroplanes, our all that science almost daily conjures from out the womb of darkness; they blandly accept them, hold them as nothing, and vex us with their self-opinionated, self-satisfied airs; but David, they were *born* among them, never knew a time without them—no *background,* David; *no background!* They weep, and we, who have known what sorrow is, know that their tears are summer showers only; they triumph, and we, who much bitterly have learnt the false and true in triumph, know that their triumphs are but flickers, come

and gone; they boast their freedom, scoff at duty, burdens, and we, who stand in our chains, know the chains that wait for them. No background, David, no background!

"Ha! You are telling me, you crabbed old David, that we too, we older ones, also one time in the days of our youth had no background, but never were such as these. Old David, we had *discipline*. We, too, were young fools, but we were disciplined young fools. The rod was not spared and the child was not spoiled. The traces were kicked at, kicked over, but the bit and the bridle steadied the young colt before he kicked himself to death. To-day the colt runs wild.

"David, I am going to open a stable where the colts and fillies, especially the poor, wild, lovely fillies, can run in and have their hurts attended to — 'Background, poor sulky colt; background, poor, restless filly'; that is the salve I am going to rub into their smarts; and a stableyard, David, where the owners, the parents, can come to seek advice about the wild young yearlings they are losing; and 'Want of background' I shall explain to them; 'Want of background, Sir or Madam, that is all it is. Pity 'em, don't blame 'em; understand 'em and sympathise with 'em; understand 'em, want of background — they will come to hand."

He had taken, he went on to say, for his "stable" a disused chapel in a decayed old street, Rigg Street, in Chelsea. The chapel had been for years a furniture remover's repository but had become inconvenient of position to the owner and for a small sum Father Absolute had secured the lease of it for ten years — "which should see me out, if ninety does!" He had made himself a cabin, bed and oil stove, in what had been the little vestry, and here he was going to preach — "Background, background, background!" and here receive his restless yearlings and their sorry owners. When, after a bit, he could induce brother clergymen to put their pulpits at his disposal, he was going

to pack his carpetbag and stump the country — "Background, background; only want of background!" — then back to the stable again; and so on. "Yes, stepping Westward, David, called by the cry of Modern Youth."

"And unpaid! At eighty," David's thought was; leaving a life of spartan rigour ("soft job, good bed, nice meals" as he had termed it) for one yet more penurious, more self-exacting yet! And he caught at this courage of Father Absolute's, as always he had been inspired by it; and thought of Father Absolute's favourite hold-fast: "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound who shall prepare himself to the battle?"; and called upon himself with his own: "Charge once more then!"; and shouted off the wolf that dogged him; and wrote back bravely and promised himself that light yet should come into the darkness that beset him.

Where, as has been promised, comes in Dawn?

Why, in this new dictionary that is old Father Absolute, there she stands written and explained — Dawn: "They have no background, David"; Dawn: "Can a young creature freshly bounding into life judge life?" Dawn: "Especially the poor, wild, lovely fillies, David . . . to have their hurts attended to."

This child called Dawn, no longer child.

Can a young creature freshly bounding into life judge life? She had no background, no tested standards, no sense of values, judged by values weighed and known. Until sixteen the adored child of her parents, their comrade and their equal in every movement of the yearly round, removed from every healthy rubbing against companions of her own age, enlarged upon every freedom that the free, wild life on Dartmoor gave. What background there? What standard but the standard of careless, much-loved, entire irresponsibility? From nearly seventeen till twenty-two

the close restrictions in a foreign land, as of a princess in a mid-Victorian England; confinement in a gilded cage; nurturing in a hothouse, whose doors and windows never must let the breeze on sheltered plants. Background? What sense of values but the sense a prisoner has that, let him once get free——! At two and twenty married to one whose life was, as it were, all background; connoisseur of a lifetime's experience and in every engagement of life similarly and equally versed, equipped; a lifetime of self-restraint, of convention, of caste, of outlook, of habit of mind and of action; a lifetime's moulding to a model. Background? Yes, there was background — Pelham's; and the position was that she, who had none, was handed by the man she had married a background ready-made, expected to comport herself by it as if it had been her own. She was, as it were, lifted up onto a very high wall over which she had never peeped and was expected to balance circumspectly along it, unwishful to pluck the flowers on the near side because able to see how they had withered on the far side; expected to be too wise to jump down among the mossy paths and woody glens of the near side because able to see the snares and pitfalls that had trapped the foolish on the farther side.

In very few months of this, exasperated, indignant, and — no background — also a little giddy, reckless, she jumped down.

Banjo was there to catch her.

When, of Banjo and Dawn, Medwyn Paradise had said that it was impossible to keep apart two persons sharing the same village street and country lanes, knowing the same friends, he had stated the true thing; the true thing also when he presented Pelham as too much averse from having himself talked of to permit it to get about that he had issued a forbiddance to his wife contrary to her inclinations; the

true thing finally, when he stated it as fact that Pelham, if forced not to forbid, was far indeed from approving.

As to the first and second of these, — the impossibility of keeping neighbours apart, Pelham's horror of being discussed — the day in any case is past when a wife, at least of Dawn's station in life, can be dragooned by her husband as wives aforetime were dragooned. There is no locking up now; escape, a mere matter of stepping from the door, calling a car or walking to a station, is too easy; publicity, that crier from the housetops by camera and print, that loudest of all loud-speakers, too eager and too great. There is no barring up of refuges; every hotel is a refuge. There is no cutting off of supplies; every husband's name is a credit note, every repudiation of it an exposure again to that publicity to which all is news, nothing sacred. Much more than all this — and it were too much without it — the day is past when a husband, of Pelham Heritage's position, can command twice on the same point. The wife-beater, the less-educated, can do it. The Pelhams are refined to-day to the point of realising, not only that there is not one will beneath a married roof, but two; but that if, temperament clashing with temperament, the other has courage to make a stand — it must stand. On an elementary footing it is a choice between that and violence; on a higher footing it is a recognition, granted as is recognition of the right to live, of the right to individual opinion — however wrong.

How the situation may be accepted and how resolve itself is another matter.

The interdict against meeting Banjo broke down of its own circumstances within a few days of its pronouncement. That word "instruction" still was tingling in Dawn's ears, mortifying her, when Lady Flogg-Walloper, following her promise made at the Admiral's funeral, called Dawn on the telephone and invited her, with Pelham or without

him, to dinner. A fortnight earlier Dawn would have given the "hold on" and gone to Pelham for decision. This day she knew what that decision would be; and on the fractional moment while she hesitated reply she made as it were the first stoop for the spring that was to take her off the wall. "It is my instruction." Yes, she had taken that, because it had come upon her so quickly and so unexpectedly; but she had let him see by the restraint in her manner ever since in what spirit she had taken it; and, no, she was not again going to take it. The evening named was free of engagement — most evenings were! She accepted the invitation; then went to Pelham.

"We are doing nothing on Thursday evening, are we?"

Her voice was purposely "ordinary." He was reading. He looked up kindly. He had hated the restraint that had been between them, but he had felt that it was not his to make the first move — that human, that fatal feeling! Here, perhaps, was the move made by her and he welcomed it gladly. "No, nothing," he smiled.

She dropped into a chair and took up some embroidery. "Lady Flogg-Walloper has asked us to dinner ——"

His face darkened.

"— And I have accepted."

He was silent a moment. "You will go alone," he then said.

She plied her needle, returning no word.

Nothing further was said on the subject until, at luncheon on the day of the dinner, she gave an order as to the car to take her — the first order, she realised before she gave it, relating to anything outside purely household matters that she had ever given.

When the servant had left the room, "You realise," Pelham said, "that this engagement of yours to-night is against my wishes?"

"You never said so."

"Nevertheless you knew it."

Her reply was, "Pelham, is it not also for you to realise —that the dinner is to my wishes, that I like to go?"

He did not answer.

When she returned from the dinner he was waiting for her in the drawing-room, reading. "A pleasant evening?"

His tone had the edge of a sword. She also therefore made ready a sword. "Not very pleasant."

He had not expected that, but he was not going to question it. "Who was there?"

She held her blade towards him. "Banjo was there."

He got up and walked across the room, away from her. He presumed her meaning to be that the evening had not been enjoyable because of awkwardness caused by having to maintain towards Banjo an attitude in keeping with the restriction he had put upon her, and he debated his answer as he walked away.

At his turn he spoke it: "Well, if you had not gone, against my wishes, you would not have met him."

She had not sat down. She was standing, drawing her gloves through her hands. She had no background from which to view this kind of thing; she only knew herself crossed, and cross. She gave a little laugh; a child's trick, to cause irritation. "Oh, it was not Banjo spoilt my evening."

He stopped and looked at her narrowly. "What then?"

"It was being badgered all the time to know why I am not hunting."

She saw his eyelids flicker; but there was no give in his tone; his tone was harder. "My answer is the same—if you had not gone, against my wishes, you would not have been badgered."

She had no background. She was very much alone. She felt herself trembling a little. "Well, I went," she said.

He paced the room its full length and then again. "It is

incredible to me," he then said, "that I should have to say such a thing; not four months married and to have to say it; but it appears that it is necessary to say it; it appears that there must be an understanding between us."

"Of what kind?"

"Very briefly, that my wishes shall be respected."

She seemed to him to be considering this a moment. "Well, I think I will go to bed," she then said and turned away.

But he made a movement, arresting her passage. "No, I think you must answer me. If you do not answer me, there is no understanding. I am not asking you anything unreasonable."

She was trembling very much now; not from fear but by reason of powerful forces charging her as a dynamo is charged; and, as with a dynamo, in a magnetic field; and her words were a cry, as it might be a spark shot off.

"Oh, not unreasonable!" she cried.

He was as inflexible, as rigid, as she was shaken, tremulous. "No, nothing unreasonable; only that in the matter of whom you should know here and where you should go, you should be guided by my experience, just as I, if I came out to you and settled among your friends, would be guided, naturally, by your experience of them. Is that unreasonable?"

She caught her breath. She was being pressed very hard. "It is unreasonable," she cried, "to imagine that your tastes must be my tastes."

He perceived her agitation; but just as she, with no background, could not but speak the first thing in her mind, so he, infinitely skilled and practised in dialectics, could not but select his phrases. "But in marriage," he said, "that is always imagined. If it were not for similarity of taste, there would be no marriages — at least, no happy marriages."

She was not capable of holding her own in this. She must throw anything that could come handy. "Ah, happy!" she threw.

Pelham Heritage turned slightly away and straightened a cushion on a chair beside him. He once had told a friend who had received insolence from a manservant that in such a case an educated man should say nothing, however gross the other's epithets. "You cannot," he said, "reduce yourself to a menial's level. In a slanging match he is bound to win. Maintain your own level. Say nothing." In occupying himself in silence with the chair cushion he applied this principle now. Dawn was in no way his social inferior; but she was immeasurably his dialectical inferior. He could not go down to the level of taunts. When taunts were thrown, he was silent.

But, no background, she misinterpreted his silence. If he could not reply to the inference of her "Ah, happy!" she had made a breach, she thought, and she could fling again. "When I see, when I begin to realise," she flung, "the difference in the way we look at things, I wonder, I ask myself — why did you marry me?"

His motion of his face from the cushion to her face was a jerk, a flash. He was amazed. He said amazedly, "Why did I marry you? You ask me that?"

"Yes, I do."

"Seriously?"

She was frightened, but she held on. "Seriously."

He said slowly, "It is incredible. I married you, Dawn, because I love you, dearly."

He would not have believed that tears, so brilliant, so immense, could have leapt so suddenly into a woman's eyes.

CHAPTER II

OF SELF–DETERMINATION: OF DAWN AND PELHAM

ENDEAVOUR now to put yourself in understanding of the processes within her, of her reactions to life, which caused in her a very different reception of precisely those same words of Pelham's — "Because I love you dearly" — when again they were spoken to her, five years later, in reply to precisely her same challenge, "Why did you marry me?"

The enlargement of one of those poor, wild, lovely fillies for whom Father Absolute planned a stable is observable therein.

Immediately with the blinding of her, the dumbfounding of him, by that sudden leap of tears, she had turned and gone from the room. In the morning he had thought to take up the position between them at that point at which it had thus, greatly moving to him, been left. But it was then too late. If at her tears he had spoken a single word, her name, "Dawn!", she must, girl and unstrung as she was, have come to his arms, and she would have remained, metaphorically, in his arms always and much of this narrative had not been written. But how many lives, how much history, would have been written differently by interposition, before the writing, of a word! Pelham was infinitely skilled in management of argument, of affairs, of himself; he was all management. But he would have said that he did not know how to manage tears; and who says that admits more than he thinks he means, for there is no management of tears; they are a breaking and an appeal to break with them; and who cannot break of himself, by appeal, is in

some danger one day of being broken. Her tears moved Pelham, but, just as it is the spectacle of a conflagration, not the cause of it, that awes the beholder, so it was the spectacle of her tears, not the emotions that discharged them, that aroused his feeling. They dumbfounded him and he remained dumbfounded and let her leave; and he remained below, softening, planning to mend this position on this spectacle on which it had terminated, while she remained above, hardening, also planning.

In the morning he communicated to her, not so much kindly as freshly, as if there had been no scene the night before, the result of his plans. Things were made a little difficult here, he said, by the presence here of people who were not to his taste. When he was wifeless it was easy to avoid them, but now that he was married it was not so easy, he quite saw that. Naturally she must respond to neighbourly friendliness; they would be talked about otherwise. "You did not tell me," he broke off at this point, "what you said when you were worried at the Flogg-Wallopers last night about this hunting business?"

Her hardening and her plans enabled her too to face him with a freshness, not only as if there had been no scene the night before but as if there had been no perception by her of the glove and the key which had led up to the scene. She was not going to be afraid of him; she was going to be equal with him. "I gave them to think," she said, "without actually saying so, that I was not desperately keen."

He was greatly pleased. "I call that, to use the slang of the day, very sporting of you. It is an extraordinary example of the position to which modern ideas have brought us that for a wife to say that she does this or does not do the other because her husband wishes it is regarded as grotesque."

She did not reply.

"As humiliating," he added, and she replied then.

"Yes, that was why I did not say it," she said.

But he took her words as reply to what he had said generally, not particularly, and he went on pleasedly, "It was very tactful of you. I appreciate it very much; tongues certainly would have started maliciously otherwise. I propose we let that be understood, if you agree."

"Oh, I agree; whether it will be accepted—it was laughed at last night."

He frowned. "Boors! That is why I dislike all those people." But he was smiling again. "So long as you agree, nothing else matters. So long as you and I stand together, good friends, nobody matters. I want to say at once that as regards hunting; another season; perhaps a little hunting box in another country; just now, what I am proposing is that we winter abroad. In all the circumstances it was not wise to come straight here, straight into the very time of the assembly of all these people, before we had scarcely had time to know one another. I see that now. If we went, say to Egypt, delightful just now and infinitely fascinating, we would return when the coast is clear, when you would have no one to worry you as, I see now, and I ought to have realised it at once, I am very sorry, you were worried last night. I think it would be very nice, do not you?"

"I think it would be very wise," she said; and he was pleased rather than any way disturbed at her choice of the word "wise." How much better, on the lips of his wife, than such barbarisms as "ripping."

How much worse!

They went; in another winter (the little hunting box elsewhere slipping, apparently, his memory) they went to Spain and Madeira; in another a West Indian cruise; in another to the South of France; and these were the places of her enlargement. He was removing her from associations which, because they were detestable to him, he thought injurious to the relations between them; but he was plunging her among influences that were injurious. He was taking

her from the England, from the English sea, from horses and hounds, from all the nut-brown ale of an English country life in winter for which she had longed, and he was causing her to drink instead the heady wines of examples and of associates in idle pleasure-making of which she was easily to be victim. The true thing that Medwyn Paradise had said of the impossibility of Pelham, without being talked about, restricting her friendships in his home surroundings, was equally and even more the true thing in surroundings where all were on the common footing of seeking only distraction from dullness. She was young and very beautiful and she was gladly taken up wherever they went, and she saw everywhere among youth of her generation that determination for self-determination which Lady Vestibule had declared to Miss Mention to be the spirit of the age. These were new ideas to her and they appeared to her, as to all without background they must appear, manifestly right, and she absorbed them. If she had needed to be pointed out the way of personal application of them — but this rarely is needed — her best possible tutors were met, and friendship with them sealed, on the occasion of the very first winter abroad when, freshly torn away from all she had desired, freshly shaken by her first open difference with Pelham, she was particularly ripe for instruction. She met in that first winter in Egypt Cynthia and Penelope Waring, those former wards of Pelham, now out there with friends of their own kind, monied young women of unlimited freedom. They knew their Pelham! No pretending with them that this, that or the other prevented her hunting, or prevented her from any other pleasure to which she might have a mind! They knew their Pelham, and no sort of consideration for him or for any of his principles modified their instruction of her as to what he was and how he should be treated. They knew their Pelham; they knew also, cynically and nakedly, why

men of Pelham's age marry young girls of Dawn's age and of Dawn's beauty, and this also they disclosed to her. All the new friends she made on these occasions seemed to know all these things and to practise the independence, the hardness, the mockery of all that had been established aforetime, and the worship of all that was to be established on its rotten old foundations. "I never asked to be born," was their guiding principle; "I am as free as one wrongfully imprisoned — having the right to be free and the determination to get and remain free!"

No background!

Thus enlargen her the years and now we may observe her come through them to that incident of driving the car, scandalously gossiped from Pelham's chauffeur to Medwyn Paradise's and by Medwyn Paradise decorously submitted to his ladies.

Pelham, on the day of that incident, went straight, as the deponents had testified, from the car into the house without a word, leaving Dawn, in Medwyn Paradise's phrase, to garage the bus. She did so; situated the car to a nicety; came out of gear; raced the engine a touch or two; switched off and turned smilingly to the chauffeur. "Not a bad exhibition, Jarvis?"

"A first-rate exhibition, Ma'am; might ha' been driving all your life."

She smiled anew, with pleasure. "Well, it is a bit different from the car I learnt on; but I believe pretty well anything comes to your hand if you go straight at it without flustering."

"That's right, Ma'am," said Jarvis, who admired his mistress.

She spoke with him as to the treatment of his injured wrist, then walked alertly back to the house, swinging her gloves, and into the study where she knew she would find

Pelham. "Anything comes to your hand if you go straight at it without flustering." She was very far from sure that Pelham in this little matter would come to her hand, but she was not going to be flustered; better to give the situation its run while it was fresh and at the time of her own choosing than at his after it had rankled.

But she saw by his face immediately she entered the room that it had already rankled sufficiently.

If you go straight at it!

"Jarvis," she said, going straight, "was much impressed. He thought it a great exhibition."

Pelham was seated at his table his eyes upon the writing pad before him. He had not looked up at her entry. Now he slowly raised his eyes and set them upon her steadily, saying nothing.

She slightly coloured; then, albeit a little alarmed — she still, despite her education by her new friends, always was a little fearful in this kind of encounter — she stood by her principle of going straight, and went straight. "My exhibition, I mean, of course," she added. "He said nothing of what he thought of yours."

Still with his eyes steadily upon her, "I gave no exhibition," Pelham said.

She laughed. "Oh, my dear," she cried, using the jaunty address and speaking it in the jaunty tone she had had of her professors in the cult of self-determination, "Oh, my dear, speaking never a word from the moment I got out and cranked the car to the moment I set you down, as neatly as ever Jarvis himself could have done, at the house!"

"No," he corrected her, "from the moment you told me who it was that taught you."

His eyes did not leave her face; he appeared to her not even to move his eyelids upon them, and she felt uncomfortable and became, therefore, as was the practice in her academy, the more jaunty.

"Well, it is the same thing. It seemed a pretty noticeable exhibition to me, anyway. I don't know what Jarvis thought of it."

His voice was sober as hers was mettlesome. "Did it occurr to you," said he, "to imagine what Jarvis must have thought of you?"

Most jauntily: "I have just told you. He thought my driving——"

Most gravely: "I mean of your having been taught by one with whom he knows, as everybody knows, I will have nothing to do."

If you go straight at it! But here she swerved a stride, avoiding that issue. "Who else was to teach me?"

"Why were you to learn?"

"Because everybody drives; because——"

"There was no necessity. The car is not an owner-driving car."

"Well, have I not asked you, time and time again——"

"Well, have I not said—I prefer you to be driven. I dislike this idea, when it is not necessary, of tearing about alone, driving. That is all right for people who cannot keep a chauffeur, for young girls; for my wife, I prefer not. We have discussed this before . . ."

She affected to yawn. "Oh, a hundred times; and many other of my ideas, which always you dislike."

He asked, "When did these lessons take place?"

"Oh, two or three months ago; soon after we came back."

"Where?"

Her professors would have been delighted at her jauntiness.

"Is this a Third Degree? In the lanes, where else?"

"And since then you have—kept up your driving?"

Her lips stiffened. "Is this a questionnaire? Were you preparing all these interrogatories as we came along?"

"I was thinking of them."

She gave a little laugh.

"So was I. Yes, I have kept up my driving, as you call it, as you saw for yourself this afternoon. Where should we have been if I hadn't? Stuck there now."

He made a motion with his hand as if to disengage from her reply its flippant portion. "But you did not see fit to tell me?"

She also made a gesture, as of helplessness. "Was it likely?"

"That is for you to say, according as how it struck you. Shall I put it another way, to make it easier: you saw fit not to tell me?"

She paled. "You make it harder," she said, "deliberately, and you know you do. This is a terrible old business to bring up like this. You know as well as I do that we agreed long ago that it was impossible for me to avoid meeting Banjo, or any of the people you dislike."

He said one word. "Openly."

She drew a deep breath. "Are you accusing me of meeting Banjo by stealth?"

"Yes."

The next word was with her but there was quite a space of silence between them before she spoke it. "Where do we stand now?" she then inquired.

In his turn he was responsible for a silence. Watching him during it, her mind, surcharged with emotions, bestriding in it one of those orgasms of intensity in which a lifetime may be traversed, she was aware of points of likeness between him and Banjo, especially about the eyes; and she was carried thence to that moment immediately before her first entry of Banjo's cottage when she had seen behind the depths of Banjo's eyes as it were the figures of thoughts moving, dim, shadowy, not to be defined. In Pelham's eyes she saw such figures now, equally beyond her comprehension.

His voice came. "First let me ask you — What is there between you and Banjo?"

"Friendship; and I will keep it."

She, as it were, flung this down with a ring, as a coin is flung down and rings, and he waited till the ring had subsided.

"Well, I will consider as to that."

"Oh, you may consider. I am not the child I was when we first discussed this, you know."

He said, "No, I have noticed that. Dawn," he then said, using her name as it were, to close one chapter and start a new, "you ask 'where do we stand now?' I will try to tell you. I think we are, as for a long time we have been, but deeper now, at cross-purposes. We are making, I think, for opposing ends. What is your purpose in our union, Dawn?"

Our "union!" As always, the pedantic word! But, watching, perturbed, those shapes dimly moving in his eyes, she was glad of the irritation that, as always now, she was given by his pedantry.

"To make the best of it," she said.

He waited a moment before he answered. "So often," he then said quietly, "that expression, 'to make the best of it', is used when to make the worst of it is intended. What was your purpose before our union, when we joined it?"

"Are you asking me," she said, "why I married you?"

"Yes, I am asking you that."

"Well, then," she cried, "as you have just told me that you suspect me of doing things by stealth, as you have chosen to asperse, as you would say, my friendship with Banjo, I will tell you — frankly. I married you simply, solely, to get back to England, to live the life that I was brought up in and that I longed, day and night, to live again."

She saw those figures behind his eyes as it were in commotion, as though a stone had been thrown into the pools

in which they lay, disturbing the surface, stirring the depths.

He asked, "No other reason?"

"None whatever — and bitterly I have been disappointed."

"I also," he said, and sighed; and the sigh seemed somehow to her to have consonance with the dim, perturbing figures, as it had been their voice in their commotion; and petulant at what she could not understand, she threw another stone.

"Well, you be frank now, as I have been. I have told you, frankly, why I married you. Tell me, if you dare, frankly, why you married me."

His voice was infinitely puzzled. "If I dare?"

"Yes, if you dare."

"I married you because I loved you, fondly."

No sudden, brilliant surge of tears this time. She had been made too wise by her professors, and it was out of their wisdom that she answered. "I knew you would not dare. You married me because I was young, fresh, beautiful — because you desired me!"

His word was her name: "Dawn! Dawn!"

But the sound of it scarcely was gone from his lips when a knock at the door brought in Jessop, the butler, with a telegram. Pelham opened it and gave an exclamation. "No answer," he said, and allowed Jessop to leave the room. Then he spoke. "James Heritage is dead," he said, "he has been drowned yachting."

CHAPTER III

OF A CORNER: OF A WAY ROUND IT

A SEQUENCE of events is to be noted. On one day had taken place the hurt to Pelham's chauffeur on Calshott Hill, Dawn's handling of the emergency, Pelham's concern at her ability thus to have handled it, and the news of Jim Heritage's drowning; a week later was Medwyn Paradise's little dinner party, at which these matters, together with his meeting that afternoon with David Quest returning from the Bishop who knew not Joseph, were, glinting, discussed.

Pelham and Dawn had been invited to the dinner. Dawn, regretting for him her husband's inability, had accepted for herself; and Medwyn Paradise, glinting, had then invited Banjo.

Banjo had said Yes; then, on the very next morning, had telephoned No; he had been called, he said, urgently to London. This was the morning of the announcement in the newspapers of the drowning and later in the day had come also Dawn's cancellation of her acceptance. "Of course you will understand," wrote Dawn; and Medwyn Paradise, relieved from finding another man to take Banjo's place, of course did. Banjo's sudden failure, on the other hand, he did not understand. How on earth should Banjo, who appeared not to have an interest or a tie in the world, suddenly develop urgent business in London? It was a mere excuse, Medwyn Paradise, glinting, felt sure. But on what account? If it had been made after

reading of the drowning, when Banjo would have guessed that Dawn Heritage would not now be of the party, an entertaining two and two might have been put together; but Banjo had telephoned early, before breakfast, and newspapers did not come out to the villages until nearly midday. It could not have been that; yet that it was in some way connected with her now become Lady Heritage, Medwyn Paradise, glinting, was convinced. Banjo had only agreed to come to the dinner by bait, dexterously administered, of her presence. The invitation had been by telephone and while it stood at "dinner next Thursday, to-morrow week", the tone of Banjo's response, "Oh, very nice of you, Paradise; thanks ever so much; I don't know, though, that —" had intimated that he was going to shuffle out of it. Medwyn Paradise had then, glinting, run through the list of guests, nonchalantly, but with especial high-tension glints, slipping Dawn's name into the middle of it — "Not Pelham, of course, or I wouldn't have asked you, old man; he can't" — and Banjo, with just sufficient more shuffling to show that he was not now jumping where before he was about to refuse, had then accepted. Why, then, later refused? Could he somehow have heard of the drowning before the arrival of the papers? Medwyn Paradise wished he could know that. But even if he had, why rush away to London in order to escape the dinner because guessing Lady Heritage would not be there? The evening would not have been so distasteful to him as all that.

"There is something in this," said Medwyn Paradise to himself.

"There is a snake in that Paradise," Dawn once had said to Banjo, an instance of Paradisiac gossip being under discussion; and if she could have seen the glints with which he cogitated *what* there was in this, *why* the dinner had been escaped, and *how* in order to add them to his

amiable small talk, he could find light upon these questions, she would have been justified in pronouncing the glints an illustration of her aphorism.

But it was not, in fact, the dinner without Dawn's presence that Banjo had fled to London to escape. He had not known when he made up his mind thus to flee that she would not, as it was to happen, be there. He had fled for the same reason that he had at first accepted — because she was to be there.

He was in these days terrified — no, horrified — of what was going to happen between him and Dawn.

"If I could only get round the corner, break with it for a spell," in these days he was saying, "I could keep on down the straight; I have done it before. It is the corner that beats me — weathering the cape!"

It was the drink, not that love for Dawn — approaching him when first he had affixed that picture to his wall, threatening him when, crying "No, by God, no!" he had torn it down and destroyed it, seizing and overmastering him in the time that followed — that here he was referring to: uttering the aspiration whimsically, in his characteristic habit of speech, to David Quest, to his friend Tom Creek, the Kington Berger doctor, once to Dawn herself; crying it terribly, in deep agony of soul, to himself, when he was alone; when the exhilaration of drinks, tearing him as an unclean spirit and then casting him away, had abandoned him; when through the darkness of the night, not sleeping, he held in terrible review the darkness of the day from which the night had come.

But the two battles against himself, against himself that drink possessed, against himself that Dawn possessed, that was possessed of Dawn, had intimate connection; and of this connection he could not tell any one, could

seek the help of none. He longed to tell Quest, he longed to tell even Tom Creek, he longed above all to dare to tell Dawn, why it was that he was trying to stop the drink; but he could not. If he could have said, "Help me, Quest; help me, Tommy; help me, Dawn; I am trying to chuck the drink because I am in love and because I want to be worthy of love;" if he could have said that — well! — a thousand times well! But he could not say that. First he could not say, "I am in love," because it was another man's wife, much worse, his half-brother's wife, with whom he was in love; second he could not say "because I want to be worthy of love," because it was not to be worthy of love that he wanted; it was to tear this love out of his heart that he was longing. He could perceive, with a laugh that was a groan, a humour, a paradox in his situation. Many men have set themselves to give up drink in order to win a woman; his battle was to give up drink in order to lose a woman. He was horrified when he thought of what he knew to be approaching between himself and Dawn; he was terrified that he would not be able to hold out his resolution against suffering it to approach. When he was drinking he was imperiling his strength of resolution. One day, unless he stopped this drink, his strength would rip away beneath his feet, dissolve away from between his hands, and he would cry out to her that which daily, nightly, hourly, momently his heart cried out within him: "I love you! I love you! Oh, loveliest the world has ever known, I loved you in that first moment I saw your lovely countenance! Oh, Dawn, whose name is life, come back into the world; life dawned when first you dawned upon my life — my timid fawn; my spirit not of earth, ethereal; my darling, my darling!"

Yes, unless he could stop the drink which was eating away the restraints he put upon himself, one day he would

leap from his restraints and cry that to her. Yes, unless he could hold his strength, one day he would hold his arms about his brother's wife!

Oh, horror most dreadful!

Yes, and while that cry to her shook the foundations of his strength; yes, and while that horror shocked most the bases of his rectitude; then in particular, distraught, the craving for support from that which undermined the more!

"If only I could get round the corner I could keep on down the straight! It is the corner that beats me —weathering the cape!"

Debating the weathering of that cape, hearing in his heart the sound of that cry of his love for Dawn, he was out walking on the day that was watching, some miles across the country, Dawn starting Pelham's car on Calshott Hill, when he was himself cheerily hailed from a car come up behind him and pulling up beside him, and looked up, very gladly, into the smiling face of Doctor Creek, the Kington Berger doctor.

Doctor Creek, known to all as Tom Creek and to a large number as Tommy Creek, was a spare, trim, clean-shaven man of thirty-five at a shot, but nearer fifty as a fact, who always looked, in Banjo's phrase, as if he had just had a tub and a shave at his tailor's in Savile Row and had stepped out to advertise the firm. This was because he always kept his clothes, his hands, his face, his hair, as scrupulously as if he were bound for a wedding; and this was surprising, because he had been three and twenty years in practice, almost solely a panel practice, in Kington Berger; and a professional man — Church, Law or Medicine — entombed in a village will excusably begin to go to seed in years decidedly fewer. David Quest,

who had no idea of Tommy Creek's length of sojourn until he had known him some little time, was startled when he heard it. "What!" he had cried, staring astonished at the fresh, spruce figure, the well-pressed trousers, the well-set coat, the treed, smartly varnished boots. "What, you have been twenty-three years there in that place, here in these villages! Man, you look as Banjo says, as if you had just come from Savile Row. How do you do it?"

"Not by going to Savile Row," Tommy Creek had laughed. "My hunting things, for instance, when I started hunting, I had to buy second-hand, off Jim Heritage's valet. Oh, it is just habit, I suppose, keeping your bags in a trouser press instead of bunging them on the floor."

But David Quest, who then had been but three years in his village, was not done yet with his wonder.

"Why do you do it?"

"Oh, why? Lord knows. Why do you keep up that early service you just were telling me of, when, as you say, not a soul goes to it, bar the astounding Banjo now and again?"

David slightly flushed. "Because I started it when I first came."

"Same with my trouser press. Doesn't do to let yourself unpeg, go down, in our sort of life, I reckon — yours and mine."

David's face had twitched.

"Cheer-o, Banjo," now cried the man who would not let himself unpeg. "How goes it?"

"Fair to middling, Tommy," said Banjo. "How with you?"

"Oh, grinding along, as per. Hunting has begun again; that is the great thing, and old Joe Todd is going to get me one of his three-legged screws again on the cheap, be-

cause he still won't pay his bill, so life has shed some of its darkness. Banjo, your pal the vicar says you have been deserting him lately."

"Correct; I know I have."

"Well, you shouldn't. That chap is in a bad way. Do you know it?"

"Better than you, I daresay. That is partly why I have not been to see him so much. He is pretty well all in, Tommy; lost everything through coming here and losing the old Admiral five years ago, and now he is losing his pluck. Pluck is one of the many things I can't give a man, having none, Partner, and that is why I am no use to him. He gets more from seeing you once, Tommy, than me a hundred times."

"Me!" said Tom Creek incredulously. "What on earth does he get from seeing me?"

"Pluck — he says. Did you tell him some time ago when you had had to chuck up an evening out, or something, that you reckoned a doctor's life was all giving up?"

"Yes, I did. I remember it very well, because it was the night of the hunt ball. I came out to his wife on my way, in my nice dance suit, and she had gone mighty queer since the morning and I stayed the night. He tried to make a fuss about my giving up the ball and I said, quite naturally, that there was absolutely nothing to it, because I reckoned a doctor's life was all giving up. I remember it perfectly because ——"

"Yes, well, that was it. He was mentioning it to me again, last time I saw him; told me that he knew that his life ought to be all giving up and that he often forgot it, and that you reminded him of it once, by what you said about yourself, and that it had helped him ever since whenever he saw you. He blubbed, Tommy."

"Blubbed!"

"Well, not exactly howled; but tears came into his eyes, and he turned away, and I did not like it a bit. He had been telling me that his wife was ill again, and that she was the one who kept him up to this giving-up business, instead of being always after getting on, and that without her he was a lost man. How is she, Tommy, better?"

Tom Creek, whose sympathy, as whose care for his personal appearance, twenty-three years of rural panel practice had no way impaired, had been listening sympathetically, and sympathetically replied not only as to the patient but on the whole case.

"She is mending, I think. That's a bright soul, Banjo, and bright souls never crack, but she never will get quite A-1 in that darned cavern. That vicarage ought to be burnt, Banjo, only I doubt it would light, it is so damp, and a new one built just top of it on the hill. Why doesn't some one do something for the poor chap?"

"Who can? I thought Jim Heritage would one time, only that dashed Pasture woman, as I believe, queered that pitch for him; and my dear brother Pelham, who might, won't even recognise him."

Tom Creek nodded. "Bad show. Pity especially about Pelham; he might do a lot; the more so as the wives, Mrs. Heritage and Mrs. Quest, are great pals, aren't they?"

Banjo glanced away. "Yes, a great friendship between them."

"Mrs. Quest was telling me a lot about it when I was there just now. It appears they call themselves a mutual help society. Mrs. Heritage helps her with the kids, with their mending and all, which I thought rather jolly of her ——"

"She loves it," said Banjo.

" So I gathered; all the same, you would not expect it in her position; but what help precisely she gets out of Mrs. Quest, Mrs. Quest wasn't telling me. I wouldn't —— "

" She says she gets a mighty lot," said Banjo.

" That so? Well, as I was about to say, I wouldn't have imagined that a lovely creature like that wanted much that Mrs. Quest could give her." He put his hand to his gear lever, and his voice also had the intimation of moving on. " It's a rum world."

" It is," said Banjo, " and more in it that want help than you would think. I want a bit myself, Tommy."

" You do? " said Creek, taking his hand from the lever and turning squarely to Banjo.

" I do. I am in love, Tommy."

" You are? " cried Creek. " Banjo, that is the best bit of news I have heard in years. It will do you the world of good. Who is the lady? "

" I will tell you that," Banjo said, " when, *when* the engagement can be announced." He smiled as he said it; but Creek, quick in sympathy, knew it was not what he would have called the Banjo smile, and he expressed his sympathy, wordlessly, a man of finest perceptions, by switching off his engine.

" Thanks, Tommy," Banjo said; " point is, it may — may — be good for me but it certainly is not for her."

" Tell on, old man," said Creek.

Banjo, much as he was tempted to, had no intention of telling all that was in his mind; but he had said what he had already said for Creek to take as reason for what he was about to say. He had a defiant pride, as it were a curious sense of honour, in not concealing from, but rather proclaiming to, the world that he drank more than was good for him; but he had a deep shame of admitting that he could not stop it if he would.

" I want to chuck the drink, Tommy," he said.

Creek's eyes gleamed. " Why, what did I say? The girl has done you good already!" he cried, taking it precisely as Banjo had hoped he would. " That's fine, Banjo! Chuck it!"

" Not so dashed easy, Tommy, when it comes to the point."

" Rats, man! It is not like that with you. You don't soak. It is no more with you than, than — a cheerful habit." He laughed. " A hobby."

Banjo looked at him with deep eyes. " Tommy, I had the idea myself once that it was only a hobby. I don't mind admitting to you that I find it is riding me, instead of me riding it. Hobbies develop that trick, I believe."

" Send 'em to hell, where they belong, when they do," said Creek stoutly. " If it is riding you, Banjo, and I don't believe it, get out from under! Get another hobby and gallop away on that, that's the tip, old man."

A brooding aspect was in Banjo's face. Gallop away — from the drink, from Dawn — if only he could!

" What hobby, Tommy? "

" Oh, I don't know, any old hobby. It is only a figure of speech. It —— "

Banjo put out a swift hand to the other's arm. " Tommy, don't let it be only a figure of speech, for God's sake. Help me, Tommy. I want it — like hell."

Tommy Creek's strong fingers came down on the hand and pressed it strongly. " Dash me, Banjo, I didn't realise you were so serious. I'd go a mighty long way to help you, old man, and so would many others, though you may not know it. Hobby isn't only a figure of speech. Do something, old man; that's your cure. Do something! "

" Do what? "

" A job of work. You give the drink stuff too easy a

chance, sitting here nursing it, old man. Do a job of work."

"Don't think me sullen, Tommy — what work?"

"Practice."

Banjo gave the sound of a laugh. "Practice! Me!"

"Well, who better? Damn it, you've got a better degree than I have, haven't you? Banjo, I have offered you before and I offer it now, joyfully, keen as mustard — come in with me."

Banjo gave the same sound. "Come in with you? Ruin you? Likely!"

"Tush! Don't be a something fool! Shove up your plate and work these villages — save me hours a day, give me my day's hunting certain, instead of always doubtful; come on, Banjo!"

Banjo glanced away and blinked his eyes. "Tommy, you are a devilish good chap, and I am a devilish rotten one, bone rotten; but I am not going to be so rotten as to let you be too good. Me, in these villages! Man, apart from I am so rusty that I doubt I would know a whooping cough from a hiccup, do you suppose there is a village woman here would let her old man come to my surgery? She'd think I would teach him to drink. I am ever so grateful, Tommy, but — nothing doing."

Creek removed his hand from Banjo's and opened the car door.

"I am going to stand up to you, my boy," he said. He got out and stood up to Banjo, close. "Banjo, if you think you are going to offer me the happiest day of my life and then close it before I can jump, you are mightily mistaken. You have asked me for help and help you are going to have, if I have to take you by the neck and stuff it into you." He laughed and slipped his arm through Banjo's and changed his tone. "Listen here, Banjo, let us agree, not because it is true, but because you are an idiot and one

should always agree with an idiot; let us agree, one that you are red with rust, and wouldn't know a cut from a carbuncle, two that the people think you are doped with drink and wouldn't let you attend 'em. Right. Here's the prescription. Off you go to — " he named by its familiar abbreviation St. Nathaniel's Hospital, at which both had been students — " to Nat's for a refresher course, say three months, six if you like, one if you like. It is easily arranged. Quite a lot of men who for one reason or another have been out of touch with modern developments do it nowadays. Three months' refresher in London at Nat's — rub off the rust — shed the booze — come back here a reformed character — stick up your plate — join me — swipe the whole blooming practice, because you are so smart every one insists on having you — I try to get rid of you — you refuse to go — I take to drink — you send me for a refresher — I come back and do to you what you've just done to me — and so on — and so on. By Gad, Banjo, it's the idea of a century, what? "

But Banjo, putting out both his hands and gripping Creek's with warmest gratitude, had scarcely been hearing him as, humorously touching in his scheme, he had been running on. " Three months' refresher in London at Nat's — rub off the rust — shed the drink — reformed character! " At that his heart had leapt as at a hail in the darkness the heart of one lost amidst precipices; from that his mind, working with immense rapidity, had rushed through reformations that should be reformation indeed. Escape, at once, from the calamities that were approaching between himself and Dawn; escape, by application to the refresher course, from the poison that was corroding his hold upon himself against the passions that would impel those calamities; and once away from his heart's desire, once freed from his spirit's slavery, never, never to re-

turn! The refresher course would set him up, restore his confidence, clear his license, renew his certificates and, never returning here, he would get employments on ocean-going liners, cross the world, settle down in the new world, a saved man, and Dawn saved!

"How do I arrange it?" he was asking Creek, his thanks expressed, their mutual felicitations ended.

"Easy; write to the Dean of the Medical School. He looks after all that."

"No, I will walk right in and see him. I will go at once."

"You will! Great man!"

"To-morrow." He thought a moment — of Dawn. He must go quick, quick while the urge was on him. He knew himself too well, too well the breaking strain upon him of that lovely face, to dally; but he must see her again, a last time, before he went.

"To-morrow evening," he amended, "by the night train. And Tommy, just to prove to you that you have saved me out of deeper than you know, and just to show you what a close call it has been, I won't even let myself wait to see the Dean. I will fix the thing up right now on the telephone. Will I get him on a trunk call, do you suppose?"

Creek was entirely delighted. "You are certain to. He works office hours. And see here, Banjo, you will want somewhere to live, and speaking of trunk calls reminds me I have one coming through to-night from a chap in London, who I believe can hand you the very thing. He has a little bachelor flat in Luke Square. You remember Luke Square, quite near Nat's. Any use to you?"

"Perfect!" cried Banjo. "The very thing. Is he leaving it?"

"He is leaving it quite suddenly for six months; going to Peru on a sudden commission; mining engineer his job

is. He mentioned the flat to me in a letter I had this morning. Only a nominal rent he wants from the right person. Shall I fix it?"

Banjo declared that he was beginning to feel as excited as a country cousin off on a visit to town. "Sign, seal and deliver it," he cried. "Gum it down tight. What do I do for service? Is he leaving any one?"

"No. His man is a bit of a draughtsman to him, half clerk, half valet, and he is taking him on the job. You can fix that all right. Take Paddock."

Banjo gave a gesture of glee. "By gosh, it's a picnic!" He thrust out his hand. "Bless you, Tommy, you have saved a soul — two souls — this day."

"Bless you, Banjo. Buzz off and telephone and save yourself."

CHAPTER IV

OF A COMMAND

BANJO telephoned immediately he got to his cottage to the Dean. The call went through with a swiftness that, stepping surprisedly to the instrument as the bell rang, he declared to be auspicious to his rescue. As swiftly, not two minutes' conversation, and the thing was done, the refresher course fixed. Auspicious again! Everything was working his way. He had a sense as of an inrush of strength and he braced his shoulders to it, delighting in it. "I am going forward," he cried to himself, "forward to the glory of — of Tommy's stuff, of Quest's, of giving up!" He put a grim eye to the bureau that was his cellarette. "Settle you in a moment, my boy! Look out for yourself — the sink for you!" He shouted, "Paddock!" Paddock did not appear to be about. "Say your prayers," he addressed the bureau. "You have got about ten minutes."

He stood in thought of Dawn. The whimsically grim look with which he had warned the cellarette left his face, a troubled look succeeded it. But he kept his shoulders braced. "I am going forward," he said again, "forward to the giving-up stuff." To-morrow at noon he was seeing Dawn; that was why he had told Tommy he would go in the evening, not the morning. He could have wished he had had the courage to forego this one more meeting; but, after all, a chap could not be expected to give up every

tiniest scrap at once. "Not in training yet," he said to himself and thought to smile, but did not smile. Not in training yet, but after all, by going to-morrow evening, he was giving up a whole fortnight of the dear, the peril-saturated meetings with her. In a fortnight's time she and Pelham were starting on their usual wintering abroad. They were going first to Madeira again this time; and as he thought of when Dawn last had spoken to him of that, he found good auspices again in what she had told. They had been going by way of London, staying three nights there; but Pelham, wishing for some local purpose to be here till the actual day of sailing, had decided that they would miss out London, motoring direct to Southampton. Auspicious! He would be in London then, hard at work, and there would have been the temptation, had London held her too, once more to see her. Yes, everything was working his way: things even had been working his way before he himself had notion of it. Forward!

What of the good-bye to-morrow, when the last meeting was joined and his face definitely set upon his road? He was meeting her at noon. Pelham was to be on the Bench at Laversham Police Court and they were going a long run in the car, lunch somewhere, out alone together until late afternoon. What of it? He sat down and put his head between his hands, wrestling this, strangling it slowly down to least, last possibility of danger. Forward to the greater glory of giving up! He would not tell her that he was going away, he decided, until the very moment of leaving her, until, as he would somehow contrive it, she could stay not a minute longer. And he would tell her, even then, only that he was going to London for this course, not that he was going out of her life and she out of his forever.

She out of his! The fingers of his hands upon his head contracted in great pressure. She out of his!

Ah, this was slipping back! Already, and the tax upon his resolution not yet come! This was defying the auguries! This was selling the pass! Forward! He jumped up, throwing out his arms as if casting away the snares that had come edging about him. "Paddock!" he called, and went to the window and threw it open. "Paddock!"

"Sir!" came Paddock's voice, pulsing with ring as of a slave from whom chains had suddenly fallen, and round the house came doubling Paddock; shirt sleeves, bowler, moustaches; face gleaming with expectation.

"I want you," said Banjo, "if you are not on anything important."

"Sir," cried Paddock, springing into position of attention and bursting with eagerness to remove all suspicion of importance from what he had been on; "I'm no more than filling in my time going over that wretched old car hose with the solutionizer, sir, and that's no better than sheer wicked waste of a man's time, sir, for the faster you mend a leak in one place there's one squirts out at you in another, sir. Sir. . ."

"If you stand on it with both feet while you are filling the radiator as I caught you doing the other day," interrupted Banjo, "you can't expect the thing not to leak. It's a hose, not a carpet, as I have explained to you before; and if you kept it on the hook instead of on the floor. . ."

"Sir," cried Paddock, trembling beneath the weight of this aspersion, "there's not a rubber tube made that will stand the wear that tube's bound to get out on that old washing place, sir. Sir, the only hose for a gentleman's garage, sir, is a nice wire-bound hose, sir. If I had a nice wire-bound, sir . . ."

"Yes, if you had a nice wire-bound hose, I should have a nice paint-scratched car, I can tell myself, the way you go about the job. Wire-bound hoses in a small washing space . . ."

" Sir," cried Paddock, observing the tide to be setting against him, and speaking therefore with the passionate sincerity of a popular newspaper on the morning of a change of policy. " Sir, there's more harm been done to gentlemen's cars by those wire-bound hoses, sir, than by all the wear and tear you could get otherwise put together, sir. Sir, for a soft, pliable hose that wouldn't scratch a car, not if you scrubbed it with it, sir, I don't suppose there's one garage here got one to touch ours, not from here to Laversham and back, sir. Sir. . ."

" Well, let us leave it at that for the time being," proposed Banjo. " It is a most extraordinary thing how I never seem able to mention a thing to you without its development into an argument. What I wanted you for, and let us just leave this as I say it for once, if you don't mind, is to tell you to clear all those bottles and glasses and things out of my bureau here and empty the bottles down the sink, all of them. Do you get that? "

Paddock, from the blank look that struck the sheen off his face as breath upon a mirror, got it, apparently, with sense of stupefaction. He drew a deep breath rather as if he were trying to swallow the stupefaction. " Sir — " he began.

" As I say it for once, I said," commanded Banjo, aware of the consternation he was causing and amused by it but not wishful to discuss it. " Hop in and get to it — not through the window, you amazing ass. Come round the proper way."

Paddock who had hopped to it by throwing a knee out of his stupefaction on to the window sill, rather as if he were bounding into a rescue, rebounded as if he had been pushed, and, flexing his arms, doubled smartly away to reappear through the door, be greeted at the bureau which Banjo had opened for him with, " Everything; all the lot; and no talking;" and with the hard breathing through the

nose of one bursting for speech and injuriously condemned to silence, set about his task.

The decanter he fitted beneath his arm, the bottles between the fingers of his left hand, the glasses in those of his right, Banjo grimly watching, and, thus laden, moved to the kitchen door.

" Sir," broke in he at the door, daring the grim eye much as the executioners of the princes in the Tower might have dared that of the Duke of Gloucester, " sir, do I understand it is the full bottles I am to empty? "

" Well, there's not much damn sense emptying the empty ones, is there? " Banjo inquired.

Paddock ran the whole of his tongue round his lips, rather as if he were swabbing a window with it; and, having thus expressed the hopeless case of an employee unfairly stung by his employer, set down the glasses on the floor preparatory to turning the door handle.

The barb was removed and exquisite balm applied, even as he stooped.

" Paddock," said Banjo, " how would you like to come up to London with me for a bit? "

" Sir! " cried Paddock, springing upright and grinding a tumbler to powder beneath a foot in the convulsion of his excitement, " Sir! Go to the great metropolis with you! Sir, if I could visit the great metropolis with you, I don't suppose I'd ever want another treat in all my life, sir, not if I lived to be a hundred years of age, sir! "

He sprang into position of attention upon another tumbler and, too excited to notice it, stood upon it, trembling.

" Well, I don't precisely mean go hand-in-hand with me about the great metropolis, as you call it, visiting the Zoo and that kind of thing," Banjo explained. " I think I would move a little away from those glasses if I were you; I shall want one, even for drinking water out of.

I am going up for some hospital work, as a matter of fact; I am starting to practice again shortly; and for three months I have a little flat which, if Mrs. Paddock can let you go, I thought you could run for me. What about it?"

"Sir," cried Paddock, dashing a hand against his eyes into which tears of passionate enthusiasm had started, "sir, if there is a thing I have wanted all my life, it is to run a gentleman's flat in the metropolis single-handed, sir. Sir, if you saw me in a flat in the metropolis with a dear little gas cooker and hot water streaming out of the tap every time you touch it, sir, I don't suppose you'd know me, sir. Sir, in a dirty little old village like this, with rough, common country people that shave once a week and then often miss it, sir, a man of my training longs for the metropolis like as if his heart would split in two, sir. Sir, my wife, sir, will have her mother down to stay with her, sir, and wouldn't stop me going to the metropolis, sir, not if —. My wife, sir. . ."

"Well, go and have a talk with her," cut in Banjo, accelerating as it were while the other was changing gear from himself to his wife. "I am hearing definitely about the flat to-night and if all is well I shall go up by the seven o'clock train to-morrow evening. You could manage that?"

"Sir," cried Paddock, quivering so that the bottles in his hand rang together, "sir, if you asked me to come this instant minute, I'd no more than pop on my coat. . ."

"Well, pop those bottles where I told you for a start," commanded Banjo. "Get to it. You will have clearing up to do, as well as I," and he turned to clearing up that he had in mind, spent the evening busily at it, heard from Creek that his occupancy of the flat had been arranged, and went to bed, very late, high-tensioned in the glad consciousness of to bed for the first time in years without a drink, high-tensioned by that victory, and by its surprising ease, for the

victory in the dreadful decision to leave her that was to save Dawn to-morrow.

The night, albeit entered thus equipped, was not good. All through much troubled sleep he saw her lovely face, at every waking woke in bitterest distress from parting done in dreams to happy realisation that it had been dream alone — immediately to direst realisation that the coming day must make it fact; and then again to doze, to dream, to struggle from that agony to bliss of waking, to plunge from bliss of reassurance to bitterness of truth.

So through the night.

Later he slept more soundly, awoke at dawn — to thought of Dawn, and found himself, supported by the victory and resolutions overnight, though fearful, strong. To go to Quest's early service was an obvious decision, and he went. He had not seen David for more than a week, and he had a qualm as he set out at his neglect and at the further and prolonged neglect, permanent perhaps, that must come of his intention.

David was pulling at the single bell, tolled daily to deaf ears, when Banjo entered the church. Seeing him anew after an interval, Banjo was struck, with qualm anew, at his appearance. His face was terribly thin, all hollows and peaks, having the suggestion of a mask rather than a face, Banjo thought, with strong light burning in it, which was his eyes, very bright, with a hard, dry, unnatural brightness. Also his hand when, Banjo coming to him, he gave it to Banjo, was of a dead coldness, as a stone strikes cold; bony as though fleshless.

Nevertheless his face lit up as he caught sight of Banjo, his hand chill but its grip warm; and Banjo had not need to be told the reason. " I always pray when I tug on this rope," David said. He gave three more pulls and voiced his prayer

aloud: " Come! Come! Come! " He released the rope and gave a twist of a smile. " Fifty tolls I always give. Fifty multiplied by three sixty-five — I was working it out the other day — is eighteen thousand two fifty; eighteen thousand two hundred and fifty prayers a year for some one to come, multiply that by five — ! " He gave the twist of a smile again. " It is seen fit that it is hardly ever answered; but when, as now, it is — ! " He put out both his hands and grasped Banjo's, red tide of happiness beneath the masklike cover of his face, his hands somehow warmer, " That pays for all the rest! "

That was what Banjo had not need to be told. He knew this vicar now. That masklike countenance, those peaks, those hollows, that stonelike hand, were the sapped spirit that the years here of disappointments, rebuffs, of grinding poverty, of prisoned isolation, of endeavour fruitless, of enterprise frustrated, of hope denied, had drained and gnawed away; that tide of colour at once responsive to his " Come! " that warming of his hands at hands stretched out to his, was rehabilitation in the spirit that, seeking guidance before coming here, had prayed with Roddy, as long since he had told Banjo, " If there be one, one only who needs my help! "

" That was Roddy's prompting, her dear heart," he had told Banjo. " I thought at the time it was my own heart; but, man, a man does not know his heart until the testing irons are put to it, until the battle is joined — as here. Banjo, I came here with the war cry on my lips 'A great name for the Church ', but the cry in my heart was ' A great name in the Church ' ; had been for years. Now I am put to the proof and found wanting. That Father Absolute I am always telling you about warned me of this. ' David,' he was often saying, ' a chap has always got to be in training; he never knows when the fight will come. Adversity is a devil of a foeman, he *is* the devil; temptation the devil too,

Beelzebub in armoured cars. You can't fight 'em, David, if when they come at you they catch you in two minds. For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound ——' That is the way he used to talk, Banjo. The trumpet has sounded haltingly to me; I should not be down like this if I had heard it clear."

But he was up, all fire, all confidence, all happiness, all for the Church, forgetting utterly the blows he was receiving in the Church when, as now, he saw a shot of his gone home, a claim he had staked showing gold; to his "Come!" one answering "Here I am!"; and Banjo, who had grown to like the man beyond a common liking, had a premonitory pulse of gladness at the much greater happiness he knew he was about to give him.

"Well, I have more for you," he said, "than merely coming to your bell. Quest, I am chucking the drink."

Talk about red tide of happiness! "You are!" cried David, "You are!"

Banjo nodded, smiling. "I have started."

"You have!"

"It is down the sink. I have got it beat."

Talk about warmth returned to David's hands, as now he clutched hold of Banjo's! "Tell me how! Tell me how!"

"Why, Quest, you told me how, the first day we met. Do you remember what you said about how the flesh sins didn't worry you, how the flesh soon would come into line, once the spirit came on deck! I was mighty impressed by it at the time. I started thinking about it while you — I wonder if you remember — turned from saying it to get yourself some tools out of my cupboard; and it has never been very far from my mind ever since; recently very close in my mind. I have been calling on my spirit, Quest, to come on deck and save me. No, wait a minute, I said calling on my spirit, but I won't call my stuff spirit, not in the religious sense; it is too deep buried; but there is a thing I did not

want to do because it is wrong, and a way I wanted to take because it is right; and it was because I saw that clearly, and because the drink was trying to shut my eyes, that I have been trying a long time to cut it out, to weather it, and now — cut, weathered!

"Mind you —" he put out a hand to hold away a moment the hands coming eagerly out to him again in the sheer radiance of joy that visibly was David's — "mind you, I am not talking what I must call 'pi' stuff. I can't count that in. I flouted that beyond recall long ago, the life I have lived. Not 'pi' stuff, Quest. I am just telling you that the wish not to do the hateful thing has come on deck, and that I am going forward under its command, to the glory of giving up."

Out came David's hands, repressible no longer, and he clapped them on Banjo's arms and held him hard and gazed on him in ecstasy. "Banjo, I don't care what you call it. You can call it what you like. I tell you that you are going forward to the greater glory of God!"

CHAPTER V

OF A COUNTERMAND

It was not until after the service that Banjo told David that his resolution to leave the drink involved also leaving Ashton Parva, at all events temporarily, but immediately, that night. He saw, when he told it, the light fade in David's face; he knew what the loss of his companionship would mean to this most lonely man; and he should have had strength, walking home, he told himself, from the courage of David's assurances that this loss was infinitely more than compensated for by the gain of knowing that it was his influence that had helped Banjo's victory. "Well, you really will be all right?" had been his last words to David, taking leave of him, after promise to call, before he set out to take leave of the family, at the church porch; and "I shall be fine," David had replied. "I shall count you as *one*. Think of me, twice the man now, holding the fort, *hard*."

But it was the sudden fading of the light in David's face, the glimpse he had caught of him, turning as he went down the path, that coloured his thoughts as he trod back to the cottage. He had left David standing squarely and drawn up to his full height, "holding the fort" in physical presentment; but in that glimpse as he looked back, it was with dejected droop of the shoulders that the man was turning into his empty church.

Holding the fort? He, Banjo, had now a fort to hold; he had a vision of himself, in hours now all too few, receiving in the meeting with and parting from Dawn the first

most terrible assault upon the fort that he must hold; and, holding it, turning, as that man, dejectedly away to emptiness.

Too late on the previous night to communicate then, he had remembered his engagement to dine with Medwyn Paradise that day week. Returned to the cottage he telephoned now — his inability to keep the engagement, his sudden summons on urgent business to London. A servant took the message, Mr. Paradise not yet down; and he had a laugh to himself at old Paradise's surprise and curiosity on hearing that he of all people should suddenly develop urgent business; and out of the laugh, dispelling the cloudiness that had been gathering, a new gust of strength in this deliberate cutting away of the old in order to speed to the new. Then at eleven o'clock came the newspaper with its startling tragedy of Jim Heritage's drowning; and there was ample occupation of mind here, sad thoughts of poor old Jim, cogitation of the difference that this would make to Pelham and to Dawn, to carry him, out of contact with the matter that otherwise would have obsessed him, to the moment when he must make ready to start for it, to start for the meeting with Dawn.

He was about to go to the garage to run out the car for the purpose when a note was brought to him by Mrs. Paddock, handed in by a village child, she said.

Dawn's handwriting! He opened it.

Banjo dear, I do hope I shall find some one across the park to take this to you; I cannot send a servant and the telephone is in the study and Pelham shut up in there much concerned by this dreadful news, which you will have seen in the papers. Banjo dear, that poor Jim and poor Mr. Venture! We had a telegram last night and I cried, and cried again to-day when I saw the newspapers all full of pictures of his bright, laughing face! Banjo dear, I cannot come to-day. Pelham is not going

to Laversham on account of this, so I cannot come. Banjo dear, I will telephone to you to see if I can fix anything for to-morrow as soon as ever I can get to the telephone, so wait in all day, Banjo dear — DAWN.

Emotion swelled in his throat. There was no message in the lines as they stood to cause him emotion; but there was a quality in them, a message between and beneath them, that consumed him with an infinite tenderness towards the hand that had framed them, the disposition out of which they had sprung. Their artless, their childlike simplicity; their tears at the death of one whom, by Pelham's interdict, she scarcely knew; their iteration, above all, of his name in what he always thought of as that confiding, that trusting, phrase "Banjo dear", set her before him, as if herself had been confiding to him in his arms, in that childlike loveliness of spirit, that flowerlike opening to him as to a sun, that fawnlike appeal to the protection of his strength, that was at once the cause of his undoing and of his restraint upon himself; at once her overwhelming attraction for him and, thus defenceless against him as he saw her to be, her revelation to him of his nescience should he, overwhelmed, suffer himself so far to forget all virtues, all principles, all integrities, so far desecrate his love for her as to carry her affections by assault.

"No, by God, no!" he had cried when he had torn her picture from the wall and sent it to the flames; but that was when, met with her not half a dozen times, it was the ethereal loveliness of her face alone that he had seen; and that was an appeal which, quickly strangled, might, he had imagined, by an effort swift and violent as his cry, be cut away. He came to know her better and it was her nature, her gentle innocence, her guileless freshness, her childlike happiness in childlike pleasure, that he saw; and that was an appeal that plunged within him to depths where his own

ghosts of these, ghosts of a better self tombed in a baser, poignantly mourned, irrevocably dead, clutched out at it and could not bear to let it go.

To combat it he had conceived a plan. She brought to him in those early months of their friendship a purity, an innocence of comradeship, such as she would have given to another of her sex or to a child; coming to him out of Great House was to her as coming to holiday out of school, no more, and as such she treated him. It was from that he took his cue, on that modelled himself. He represented himself to her in return as one careless, shiftless, idle, merry, wholly companionable, wholly delightful, but wholly without trace of depths — a surface creature, untouched by anything of more than surface show. And his plan succeeded. To a man, more animal than is a woman, depth in the other is not needed to arouses his senses, beauty sufficeth; to a woman, more spiritual than is the male, character is wanted, or compassion; and to Dawn, newly married, childlike in purity of mind, there was no smallest quality in the Banjo that she found, too irresponsible for character, too merry and apparently too unhurt by his failings for compassion, to give her anything but laughter; and laughter, rare at Great House, was all she wanted.

When she jumped down off that wall, unwilling, with eager limbs, to be cramped there; unable, without background, to apprehend dangers below, this, then, was the Banjo that she found ready there to catch her, and happy she was to play with him — no more than play for he, apparently, had nothing more than fun to give her.

"Banjo, you take *nothing* seriously," she frequently in those days was expostulating; and that always gave him satisfaction. He had taught her, by his conduct, to say that.

But when he began to perceive in her, enlarged during her winter sojourns away among examples of how life should

be lived, a change, a new phase came; and out of it another, dangerous.

The change that he perceived in her, no more than a slight sophistication (but how, observing it he told himself, childishly unsophisticated she had been!); no more than a faintest breathing on the mirror of her innocence (but how crystal had that mirror been!) caused him to make perceptible to her a change in himself, a change not constant, evanescent, come and gone, come in a smile, gone in two moments in a laugh, but sufficient, first to surprise her, then to appeal to her, then to make her look at him with new eyes.

That was the danger.

When, vaguely aware of some change in her, vaguely troubled by it, he thought of sophistication as descriptive of what he apprehended but could not precisely determine, he took his trouble, as was his wont, to his faithful dictionary and had it determined for him exactly. Sophistication *was* the word. "Sophisticate: to spoil the simplicity or purity or naturalness of, to corrupt or adulterate or tamper with."

Yes, that was it! That was what they had been doing to her, those friends with whom she had been mixing! That was what Pelham, damn him, wrapped up in himself, neglected of this lovely, this exquisite, this childlike child, had been allowing to drift about her; a spoiling, no, he lightened the word, a soiling—a soiling of the simplicity and purity and naturalness of her.

It should not be! He would blow away, he determined, that dust before it settled, wipe that breath before it should congeal; and he set himself, whensoever traces of hardness appeared in her views, signs of her new ideas in her conversation, to dissipate them. It was done at first, in keeping with the character he had assumed, only by banter.

"Oh, that's rot!" "Oh, fiddlesticks to that, Dawn, that is just that horn-rimmed highbrow stuff!" "Oh, what rubbish, Dawn, that is just one of your unsexed chums talking through her Eton crop; you make me laugh!"

But one day she said to him in reply to this sort of banter, speaking ponderingly, wistfully, as one adrift, seeking guidance, "Banjo, do you think it is?" and mischief, danger, was begun.

They were on the moor above Calshott bay, he lying full length on his back, his cap on his face shading his eyes from the sun; she sitting in a favourite pose, her arms hugging her knees, her eyes looking out upon the English sea she loved.

"Banjo, do you think it is?"

The slow bepuzzlement, the childlike wonder, the gentle wistfulness, the tone of one innocent, adrift, seeking aid, struck at him beyond his control in those deeper qualities of his which he kept hidden from her. Banter could not be brought to this! This needed strength to save it!

He sat swiftly up and turned to her on his knees, his hands on her arms. "Dawn, of course it is rubbish, wrong-headed, stupid, fatal. Dawn, you are changing. Dawn, change back to what you used to be before you met these rotten friends. Change back, Dawn! Dawn, I am old, warped, going down fast; you — you are Dawn. Listen to me, the old and wise one."

And he spoke her to her good, wisely, deeply, and (of his love for her) vibrantly.

The danger!

The danger was subtle, not seen then by either of them, and coming when it came in a form which, if they had been told of it then, neither of them could have connected with that changing of his bantering advice to earnest advice.

It came in this way. From that moment of his exposure

to her of a wisdom within him not presented to her as a soufflé, beaten up with mockery, as solid fare with eggs, she began to seek that wisdom in him, bringing to him her ideas, her dicoveries, her experiences, her perplexities, rather as a child to a parent; and as a parent to a child he began to give it, laying chaff aside. The simile of child and parent is deliberate and exact because he was still to her, taught to her by his studied irresponsibility and idleness, what a whimsical, boyish father is to an infant son — an odd, funny, freakish chap, outside all laws and baby comprehensions, *but* able to do things, able to open, to untie, to make, to mend, to explain, to tell amazing stories. So Dawn now came to regard Banjo. This was the new phase, the phase of confiding in him, trusting in him, turning to him for advice; the phase of "Banjo dear" — the phase, as has been written, in which she discovered in him something first to surprise her, then to appeal to her, then to make her look at him with new eyes.

They were not eyes of love, he had too well accustomed himself to her as irresponsible, untouched playmate for that; but they were eyes of an emotion that is perilously near to love; an emotion which he, as he knew, might, if he made love to her, almost instantly change to love. They were eyes of compassion. She had thought him empty, entirely without depth, either needless of help or, merrily and with entire satisfaction to himself, beyond the reach of help. She now perceived depths to be within him and she was sorry for him and felt she would like to help him; and she said to him one day, "Banjo dear, I wish I could help you."

He knew the danger; her look, her voice, the movement in his heart at look and voice, told him the danger; and he therefore with an effort laughed and spoke laughing words: "Help! my goodness to mercy, whatever on earth help do you suppose I want?"

She said, smiling but serious: "Well, protection then,

put it that way. I think you need protection — from yourself, Banjo."

He did not reply. She thought he was vexed. "Oh, come now, Banjo! You protect me, I have often told you so, and you know you do. Why shouldn't I protect you? Listen, Banjo, I tell you what. Roddy Quest and I have what we call a mutual help society; you and I, Banjo, will have a mutual protection society"; and of that suddenly, almost unmasking himself, almost leaping from the chains with which he had bound himself, he caught her hands: "Well, then, protect, protect!" he cried. "Protect yourself — for God's sake!"

The incident passed; he laughed it off. But it had happened. He had meant, he told her, laughing at her surprise and her questioning, protect herself from the ideas and influences against which he frequently was counselling her; but a sudden look in her eyes when, making his cry, he bent his own upon them, informed him that she had seen there something she had not seen before; and it was immediately after this that he began to determine to try to stop the drink: Began — to determine — to try! Oh, arduous creeping of drugged moral power! — drugged by that infirmity whose spell, he knew, imperilled his strength of resolution, whose potency, he knew, one day would rip away his strength from underneath his feet, dissolve away his hold upon himself between his hands, and leave him crying to her, "I love you! I love you! Oh, loveliest the world has ever known . . . oh, Dawn. . . !"

Then, within ten days of that "Protect, protect then! Protect yourself, for God's sake!" when the horror of what might happen between them was sharpest upon him; when still, catching a glance of hers he was not intended to catch, lingered that new look in her eyes, increasing at once his love and his dismay, his longing and his horror, had come

Tom Creek's way of escape, of regeneration. And then his clutch at it; then his triumph in it, the bottles sent to the sink, his arrangements made, nailed down tight, water-tight, "whiskey-tight" he had whimsically smiled to himself. And now this letter from her held in his hand, presenting her to him in her childlike guilelessness, causing him, even while he held it, to rehearse these scenes, thoughts, phases that have here been marshalled . . .

He was to wait for a telephone message from her. He watched the clock; two, three, no message! To catch his train he must leave the house soon after six. Four, five—no message. At speed that each succeeding hour hastened, his courage, at this strain, was ebbing from him. It left in him that terrible sinking, that bottomless profundity of nameless fears, that only drink could fill. But he must not drink—could not; the bottles were down the sink. At four o'clock, strained almost beyond endurance, he was calling himself wise man to have had them emptied, he must have been at them otherwise; at five he was cursing himself for having done it. Half-past five, a quarter to six, ten minutes to, five minutes to—was he to leave her then, without so much as sound of her voice, without telling her that he was going. Why go? Why leave her? Why not stay, abandon this idea, throw all to the wind, lose all, win all, love and take as other men have loved and taken. Six striking! Another sound! The telephone!

He more staggered to it than walked.

Her beloved voice: "Is that——?"

"Dawn!"

"Banjo! For a minute I wasn't sure. Your 'hulloa' sounded funny. Banjo, I haven't a moment, not one. At any second I may have to stop with a jerk; you will understand? Wait! Listen! No, all right, but at any second——"

"Dawn, if at any second you must stop, hear me, let me speak. Dawn, I am going away, to-night."

He could hear her astonished catch at breath.

"Going away? To-night? Wherever ——"

"Dawn, I will tell you in a letter. Dawn — I am going — it is hard to explain quickly — I am going to work again, to practise. I had to fix it all of a minute, yes or no, and I fixed it. I am going for three months. Dawn, listen ——"

"Banjo, I am listening with every ear. It is astounding. Going — to practise — for three months; but where, Banjo, going where?"

"To London. Dawn . . ."

He heard again that catch at breath, but sharper, on a note, he could tell, of thrill.

"To *London!* But, *Banjo,* how perfectly wonderful! *We* are going to London, next week. Pelham, because of poor old Jim, and coming into the title and all, has cancelled our trip abroad. We are going to be in London all winter, taking a furnished house. *Banjo,* I can see you almost every day! Banjo, we can . . ."

Click of the instrument hurriedly shot back to place.

He slung back his own receiver, reckless whether it caught or not. He turned away and flung his arms aloft. "Ha! Fate! Fate, by God, fate, fate, fate, fate, fate! Paddock! Paddock! *Paddock,* dash your soul, where are you. *Paddock!*"

"Paddock, did you empty those bottles away?"

A red, agitated, alarmed, caught out, guilty Paddock.

"Sir, I set down those bottles to empty them, sir, and that very moment, sir . . ."

He threw up his arms again. Fate! Fate! Again fate! His voice was a shout. "Bring them! Bring 'em in, all of them, all the lot, every one, glasses, soda — quick, quick as you can skip! I'm not going to-night. I'm going to-morrow morning by the early train. To-night — those bottles — quick, quick, quick!"

CHAPTER VI

OF ONE GONE TO LONDON

HERE comes Medwyn Paradise, glinting along on foot through Ashton Parva. It is the morning after his little dinner party. He is in Ashton Parva because he is coming to see Miss Pasture about some setting eggs of a special strain for a broody hen; he is on foot because he has left his chauffeur to fill up at the local petrol pump and wait there for him; and he is glinting because his thoughts are with a letter just received from Banjo from London, explaining, relative to another matter, that he is going to be away in town "quite a bit", as he is rubbing up his medicine in a refresher course at Nat's.

There is a very great deal for the Medwyn Paradise type of mind to glint over in all this, and Medwyn Paradise glints accordingly. To begin with, he does not believe it. It fails absolutely to square with the astonishing suddenness of Banjo's rush to town. If a man, after years of idling, is going to take up a course such as this, he does not go flying up to it at a moment's notice, cutting all his engagements. Certainly not. He employs some fraction of those years of idling, say only as little as a fortnight, in arranging at that end to take this remarkable step and at this end to settle up affairs before taking it. If, on the other hand it is true, then unquestionably there is something behind it. There is something behind it for a man to go plunging into it as one might plunge oneself off a precipice, and there is something behind it for it to be embarked upon by a man who was about as likely ever to resume pursuit of a serious profession as — "as I am myself," thinks

Medwyn Paradise, "much less likely. No, a bit thin; a bit too thin, Banjo; there is something hidden up in all this"; and Medwyn Paradise glints deliciously over how threadbare thin it is, and glints at this possibility and at that possibility—broke? after some woman?—that it may be covering; and glints all around Dawn Heritage, wishing very much he could strike some connection there, but fears he cannot; and, glinting all about him as he walks, glints his eye upon the flat face of Mr. Glumday, who is seated before his cottage door staring gloomily into his beehive hat rather as if wondering either why his head is not in it or precisely what manner of satisfaction his head when it is in it finds there.

"Morning, Glumday," said Medwyn Paradise cheerfully; "seems funny to see you down here and not up at Miss Pasture's where I am just going."

"That's just it," said Mr. Glumday, replacing his hat but retaining his gloom.

"Must be quite a long time now since you left there, I suppose?"

"That's just it," agreed Mr. Glumday.

"Not wanting you after the brother came back, as I think I heard?"

"Not wanting me," said Mr. Glumday, raising in gloomy emphasis an enormous forefinger permanently crooked by years of manual labour, "Not wanting me, not till after I had taught him all I knowed, him not knowing an egg from an onion, leave alone a cockerel from a pullet. Not till after not that I wasn't not wanted."

Medwyn Paradise enjoyed a private glint over Mr. Glumday's solemn and deliberate progression through this tangle of negatives, and then put out for information which possibly might lay up some further glints for social use. "Not too happy in it, the brother, despite your teaching, is he?" he inquired.

"Leave alone a cockerel from a pullet," returned Mr. Glumday, repeating the words as though some special indignity attached to this lack of knowledge; and then, before Medwyn Paradise had time also to effect repetition, further enlarged his feelings on the situation. "There's chaps," said Mr. Glumday very slowly moving the crooked finger to and fro, "there's chaps in them there Sunday newspapers living in London, time and again I see it, as puts their heads in a gas oven and haven't been treated not half the way I've not been treated."

"Well, there are no gas ovens in Ashton Parva," glinted Medwyn Paradise, "that's one thing, Glumday."

"That's just it," said Mr. Glumday.

He spoke this with the glum finality of one who, if prohibited from making an end of all things by thrusting his head into a gas oven, proposed to do so by entering it into a silence equally stupefying; but Paradise, who found himself amused, sought amusement a little further. "Why not try for a post at Piers Castle?" he glinted. "You have heard the news, I suppose? There will be some sackings going on there, I should imagine."

"That's just it," said Mr. Glumday, poking his head out of the oven, as it were, for last words before decease.

But Medwyn Paradise, who thought that news for glinting purposes might well be here, essayed to stay him. "Ah, has Mr. Heritage, Sir Pelham I should say, begun changes already?" he inquired.

"Leave alone a cockerel from a pullet," said Mr. Glumday, whose thoughts, in the oven, appearing to be wandering. "The castle's to be shut up the winter," he added, his mind here apparently encountering Paradise's question, "and most sent off."

This really was fascinating! Medwyn Paradise knew perfectly well why Pelham Heritage withdrew not so much himself as his wife from the countryside in the hunting

season; but he had imagined that the change of location to Piers now made possible might have altered the practice. Apparently not so; more miles than those between Great House and Piers must be put between his pretty wife and hunting — or Banjo. He glinted pleasantly. "Ah, Sir Pelham and Lady Heritage are going abroad as usual, I suppose," he said.

Mr. Glumday shook his head. "That's cancellated, that is," he informed Paradise. "They're going to the London Mansion House, that's where they're going to."

Medwyn Paradise laughed. "To the Mansion House!"

"There was a gentleman in here last night," said Mr. Glumday, turning and pointing through the door behind him, and speaking as though he had rather expected the incredulity of Medwyn Paradise's acceptance of his statement, "and I've told this to a dozen if I've told it to one, as is Sir Pelham's butler gentleman called Jessop and known in the village as well as I'm known, though not mixing with it, and he told my wife, having come with a message from the housekeeper lady for some charring, that Sir Pelham have cancellated the plans for going foreign and is taking a mansion house in London for the winter, and they all going up with him end of this week. If 'tis right what chaps says here that the Lord Mayor lives in the Mansion House, then 'tis wrong——"

But Mr. Glumday did not complete his sentence, for at this point of it Medwyn Paradise, who had been glinting abundantly throughout it, turned and walked glinting away. "The Heritages going to London!" his glints would bear interpretation. "Taking what the butler of course would call a mansion, and this oaf a mansion house, for the winter! *That* was the reason of Banjo's sudden dash to town! That the reason of his surprising occupation there for 'quite a bit'." Look how it all fitted! The Heritages, as had become known, had had news of the drowning the

night before it was in the papers; they would have settled at once that this meant cancelling the trip abroad and dealing with business affairs in London; Lady Heritage no doubt telephoned the change of plan that night to Banjo; Banjo, first thing in the morning, telephoned his urgent summons to London to him — oh, this was, this was *urgent* indeed!

His steps took him where he had been going when he stopped at Mr. Glumday's; but his glints were throwing up such flashes in his mind, such revelations of too thrilling possibilities, that when he reached Miss Pasture's gate, and when Miss Pasture, in the garden, saw him and came towards him, he had difficulty in recalling what it was that he had come about.

Banjo! Lady Heritage! He had surmised much; he had been far, far behind the actual state that clearly must exist between them!

The business of the eggs for the broody hen was soon settled. Medwyn Paradise, who was in luck that morning, had no more idea that Miss Pasture would glint as sharply as, but more balefully than, himself over conjunction of Banjo and Dawn, than he had had that genial salute of Mr. Glunmday would elucidate for him the puzzle over which he was glinting when he caught sight of that hardly used expositor of the difference between an egg and an onion, a cockerel and a pullet. But the matter was big within him and he could not wait, no gossip can, to take it home to his circle before giving it a little air.

"Well, big changes," said he, preparing to air it, as they turned away from the hencoops, "over at Piers, eh?"

"And not too soon," returned Miss Pasture, by her tone laying her estimate of Jim Heritage on his tomb without any pretence that it was a wreath.

"Oh, well, I liked young Jim," said Medwyn Paradise generously, "with all his faults. A pity though, I quite agree, to see a great old place like that made ducks and drakes of."

"A scandal," affirmed Miss Pasture shortly. "It has come at last into the hands that it deserved long ago. And that deserved it," she added.

"And gets a quite charming chatelaine into the bargain," said Paradise, bringing the conversation nearer to where he desired it to be.

"No doubt," said Miss Pasture.

Medwyn Paradise, much shorter than Miss Pasture, took a squint upwards at her face. Her big frame, heavily limbed, might have given him the impression of running his eye up a fortress or a tower; and if it had, her hard visage, protuberant-eyed, at its summit, would have suggested a stronghold decidedly forbidding. It was, for that matter, something forbidding, something of meaning different from what was said in the tone of her "No doubt" that had caused him to take that upward squint; and what he saw in her face, the expression from which the "No doubt" had been discharged, did not dismay him. On the contrary it rather pleased him. It promised well.

"Mrs. — that is to say Lady Heritage," said he, delicately probing the promise, "has not been too happy down here at Great House, so they seem to say; did not suit her or something; I never quite understood what the reason was."

A sound only as of contempt at this came from the tower, but Medwyn Paradise did not mind that. He rather liked it. It promised better still.

"Piers, of course," he continued, probing again, "stands considerably higher. Will they continue, do you suppose, to winter abroad?"

The same sound came from the tower but it was amplified

this time into the note of a laugh, and speech followed it. "That depends, no doubt, on what you call the quite charming chatelaine."

Medwyn Paradise also laughed. He was a master at this game and with a master's knowledge knew that signal of sympathy with the other's view was here the correct move. "Well, it is perfectly certain that Pelham wintered there comfortably enough in the old days," he agreed, making the move. "He was devoted to the place; never away from it."

The move was successful. "You have remarked that?" said Miss Pasture, dexterously drawn as it were from her battlements. "Of course everybody has. Well, even Piers apparently is to make no difference. They are going to London for the winter."

"Ah, that is true, is it?" cried Paradise. "I had heard that." He tried a glint. "But if the idea is," he glinted, "as some say, not so much a matter of health as to escape the people here, London will not be entirely successful, I am afraid. Others are off to London."

"Yes?" said Miss Pasture.

Her question was indifferent but her indifference leapt away, her whole manner changed, when she received its reply.

"Our friend Banjo," said Paradise.

Light blazed into Miss Pasture's eyes. She stopped dead and faced Paradise full. "Banjo—Banjo Heritage, going to London? Are you sure?"

"More than sure. He has gone. I heard from him this morning."

Miss Pasture turned away. A piece of drifted paper lying on the drive seemed to have attracted her attention and she stooped and picked it up. When she turned to Medwyn Paradise again, the light had gone from her eyes; and her voice, which, stonily unmodulated when she spoke

from her tower, had been sharply raised in her exclamation, was, if noticeable at all, curiously calm. Her whole manner had changed. She seemed, suddenly, very amiable.

"Is he gone for long, do you know?" she inquired mildly.

"Quite a time, I fancy. 'Quite a bit' was the expression he used in his letter."

"Really! Rather a remarkable departure for him, after all these years."

She was entirely conversational, pleasantly interested as one neighbour in the movements of another. Her face was darkly red, from her stooping for the paper, and she was slowly tearing the paper into pieces, again and again and again as she spoke; but Medwyn Paradise was disappointed in her as glinting partner. No sort of response to glints appeared to be in her.

"Yes, and quite a sudden one," he glinted. "He went off at a moment's notice, apparently."

Mild as before. "Really! Having a little holiday, the theatres and so on, I suppose? Has he gone to friends, do you know?"

"No, he has taken rooms, chambers, a kind of flat."

A shred of the paper slipped from Miss Pasture's fingers and she stooped for it. "Really?"

"Yes, he speaks of doing some sort of a course at his hospital, at Nat's. Not theatres, work—so he says!"

Glint again, but not a sign of a responsive glint. "Really; how very interesting! His flat will be somewhere near Nat's, then, I suppose. I wonder where?"

"Luke Square. Somewhere near——"

"Oh, of course, you heard from him. Luke Square; fancy; I used to know friends there. They had a flat at—at—let me see, what was the number now?"

"Number Four," said Medwyn Paradise helpfully, "is Banjo's."

Miss Pasture had torn the paper so small that it would tear no more. She tried and by the effort, and just as Medwyn Paradise spoke, seemed to get a little darker red. "Oh, Number Four. No, that wasn't their number. Four Luke Square!" she appeared to be thinking deeply. "Four Luke Square! No, I cannot remember."

She passed the torn scraps into one hand and extended the other. "Well, it is of no consequence. Good-bye, Mr. Paradise; you shall have the eggs. I must be getting to my occupations, I am afraid. Good-bye!" and she turned away, the paper clenched in one hand, the other, empty, clenched as firmly, to set about her occupations.

It was to London that on the following day they took her.

CHAPTER VII

OF ONE SENT TO LONDON

Oh, holiday that that day of his sister's visit to London was to Felix Pasture! She went at seven in the morning; it was dark when she returned. He had the whole day free of a presence that pressed upon his life as taskmaster upon a slave, her "Do you want me to tell Mother?" the crack of whip, her scorn of look and word its lash. He had the whole day free to be with his mother as he would!

Oh, holiday!

Felix Pasture had paid five years now for his sin and was paying full toll — a worse than menial about the house, checked on from hour to hour, task to task, never rested, an almost nameless drudge, grinned after, pointed at as sorry beast of burden when weekly he laboured the heavy tricycle into Laversham (and he was an old, worn man for that); but once, when he had summoned courage to urge these five long years upon his sister's compassion, "Paid five years!" her tongue had lashed him. "I have paid twenty-and-five, a lifetime! Paid! There is never a morning that I get up, never a time when my eyes see myself in the glass and then fall on you, never an occasion when I see Mother doting on you, but I am on the verge of telling her the truth about you! Paid! Wait till I bring Mother's memory back to her! Then you will begin to pay! Do you want me to tell her now, this minute? Don't tempt me to then. Get away out of my sight, thief, before you tempt me to!"

This was a passion of hate that might be thought abat-

able by the years. If it was the hatred of revenge, vengeance with the victim ceaselessly upon the rack in time is slaked, blunted; if of cold cruelty, cruelty with the victim ever in torture in time is satiated, cloyed. But the contrary was here the case. Miss Pasture's hatred, terrible in the moment of her brother's return, was not dulled by the years of his exposure to it; it was increased, refuelled, and daily fed anew. She was jealous of him. Loving her mother as she did, she had been, until her brother's return, the sole object of her mother's love. Her mother's watching for him, thinking of him, praying for him — these had been stings but only momentary twinges; her mother mourned, as it were, the dead; and the dead, whatever they may take of tears, take no food from the living; no one goes starving that a dead mouth may be filled.

But when Felix was in the house again, the woman who had given all her life, all her hopes, all her love to her mother, saw that the old favourite still was favourite — the loved eyes that for more than twenty years had lit up only for her, turning, whenever he appeared, from her to light for him; the loved hands that had stretched only to her now stretching to and fondling him; the loved voice that in every sentence had named only "Lucydear" now caressing forth at every hour "Dear Happy", "Happy dear."

Oh, terrible for her; oh, terrible, because of that, for him.

And the neighbourhood did not realise this new hardness of her lot. That, at every manifestation of it, was a further fuelling of Miss Pasture's hate against her brother. Before his return there was sympathy for her, there was the vent, further, of telling every one about him and forcing sympathy. Now that he was back there appeared to her to be a feeling rather of sympathy with him; and it was impossible for her to tell that her suffering now was in the fact of her mother's affection for him. In all the villages

there was only one, it appeared to her, who realised the new suffering she now had, and that, she had laughed bitterly at it sometimes, was the very man who, by sending her brother back, had caused it — the vicar. She had resumed contact with David Quest. She had had to. It was her mother's doing and she could deny her mother nothing, not even that. One day the vicarage children, passing the gate and seeing old Mrs. Pasture taking the sun in her chair by the door, had waved to her and she had called them to her and then, adoring children, begged them to come again. Then the vicar's wife had passed with them and, to Miss Pasture's astonishment, had come in as though that violent letter had never gone from Stone House to the vicarage; and old Mrs. Pasture, greatly taken by Roddy's winning freshness, had shown great happiness in her visits — Miss Pasture either absenting herself or sitting stonily by. Finally, for the Easter Sunday of the year before this day of Felix being given holiday by Miss Pasture's visit to London, old Mrs. Pasture, confined to bed with a bronchial attack that had caused Miss Pasture much alarm, had expressed great wish for the sacraments to be administered to her; and Miss Pasture, at bitter cost to herself (but she would pay any price for her mother) had bade Felix desire the vicar to come for the purpose. David Quest came. Miss Pasture, passing him always with averted head if met in the village, noticed with grim satisfaction the downward change in the man since the time of his arrival, with satisfaction the marks of how faithfully, by cutting him off from the support of Piers, by undermining the attendance at his church, she had dealt with him in the matter of her promise that bitterly he should regret that arrival; and she would herself have no intercourse with him. But he captured her mother's heart as his wife and his children had captured it and, for what he was able to bring, with more reason, greater claim. His attendance on

old Mrs. Pasture became of established regularity. Miss Pasture, frigid, baleful though she presented herself, could not avoid meeting him. Himself he manifested no sign whatever of knowledge of her enmity and it was early in this period that, evidently observing what others as evidently did not observe, he spoke to her of what he saw.

She was standing at the foot of the stairs as he came down from her mother's room and she, according to her practice, would have let him pass without a sign, much less a look. But he stopped and spoke.

"May I say, Miss Pasture, that I feel very sorry for you in what I see is happening here?"

She gave him the tone she was wont to give to Felix. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that in all the circumstances it is very natural that you should feel your mother's affection for your brother."

She gave him the look she was wont to give to Felix. "That comes well from you, who are responsible for his being here!"

He did not flinch. This was the David that was trying to hold the fort, whose bell was sounding "Come!"

"I do beg," he said steadily, "that you will let me say, a little helpful perhaps as coming from an outsider, that your mother's devotion to you is in no degree impaired by her happiness in your brother's return. She is able, by that happiness, to love you more. I know it; I can see it; she has told me so. But do let me say, Miss Pasture, that I realise, understand, most deeply."

She did not reply and he went; and she permitted what he had said to cause her no smallest regret for what she had done to him; but she permitted herself also to be, thereafter, a shade less hostile in her attitude towards him.

The attitude of mother and son towards one another in

this household, filled by its head with a devotion so fond yet now so jealous for the one, a malevolence so great and so daily embittered towards the other, was a thing infinitely pitiful. Felix, set to his tasks, was kept from his mother all day except, when she was up, at their meals; and then and in the evenings his meeting with her was beneath Miss Pasture's eye. Old Mrs. Pasture made the pretence that there was no restraint upon their communication together, but she was conscious of the restraint and Felix was in chains beneath it; and conversation, much less manifestation of love, between two people in the presence of a hostile third at best is artificial.

It was only at night that they could come together. At night, when Miss Pasture's bedroom door was closed (she permitted herself that comfort now) and she asleep, Felix would steal through the communicating door and come and kneel beside his mother, and his mother's arms would be about him, and his arms about his mother, and they would whisper and love, and often old Mrs. Pasture would fall asleep like that and Felix stay perhaps for hours holding her thus.

"Go now, Happy dear," she would awake and drowsily murmur.

"In a minute or two, Mother darling, in a minute. Sleep on again, dearest Mother, and then I will slip away."

Or she would awake and, without preamble or distinction of person referred to, drowsily would murmur that which so often she said as they talked together, occupying her dreams as her conscious thoughts: "You see, what it is, Happy dear, is that she has had a very dull time with me to look after, and I think she feels, dear, that you ought to have been here too, and that is what it is, dear, that makes her seem a little irritable sometimes, dear. I think she doesn't like to see us too much together, dear, or hear us

saying loving things too much, just because of that, dear; so we mustn't do it and mustn't mind, dear. She has been so very, very good to me all these years, Happy dear; oh, so very, very good and loving, so we mustn't mind, dear; no, we mustn't mind."

His voice: "Sleep on, dear Mother, now. Of course we do not mind. Sleep on now, dear Mother."

And then presently:

"Are you still there, Happy?"

"Yes, still here, Mother."

"Go now, Happy dear."

"In a minute, Mother. You just drop off, Mother dear, and then I will go."

She drops off, but he does not go. All he has forfeited for twenty years, all he has thought of and longed for in a lifetime, all he had thought never to see again, is here between his arms, and he has sinned unspeakably against it, and its mind, by a miracle, is innocent of the wrong he has done it, and to-morrow his sister may reveal his crime to it, show her who only remembers his youth all his base manhood, and, while he can, he will not let it go. Consider his case. Omit his robbery of his mother and consider him only as fellow mortal, upright and estimable as thyself. Is there any life that would not, if it could, have all its offences against a loved one, neglects, hard words, unkindnesses, wiped from that loved one's memory and be restored to it as in a portrait of that life of twenty years ago?

Felix Pasture was thus restored; and there was no hurt he would not suffer at his sister's hands, no order of hers he would not fill, to keep that restoration unimpaired.

She came back from London to him with an order.

She said nothing to him that night, but in the morning she called him to her.

"I am sending you to London next week."

"To London, Lucy?"

"To London. You are to——"

He interrupted her, entreatingly. "Lucy, you are not going to send me away for good?"

"I am not—yet. It depends very much on how you do what I am sending you to do whether I ever let you return. Do you understand that?"

"I hear you, Lucy."

"Do you know Luke Square in London?"

"Luke Square? It is in Bloomsbury, near St. Nathaniel's Hospital."

"I expected you would know. It was in Bloomsbury, wasn't it, that that woman lived for whom you sold your mother and your sister?"

"Lucy, I still and always declare to you——"

Like crack of whip: "In Bloomsbury, wasn't it?"

"She lived off Russell Square, Lucy."

"Most of her sort did, in those days. Well, you will have opportunity to go and sit on her doorstep and weep for her. If she is still following her profession she may see you, and fine and handsome she would think you have grown, wouldn't she?"

Miss Pasture made a scornful laugh, then changed her tone. "Listen to me. Banjo Heritage is living in Luke Square in a flat at Number Four. Number Four stands almost at one corner of the square. On the side at right angles to it, and almost at the corner at that end, is Number Ninety-seven, an apartment house, and from the front windows of that you look straight across the angle at Number Four. Do you follow that?"

He said wonderingly, "Yes, Lucy."

"You will when you get there, anyway. I have taken a front bedroom for you on the third floor of Ninety-seven, from Monday by the week. On Monday you will go there

and you will spend the whole of your time, the whole of it, in watching Banjo Heritage. When he goes out, you will go out and follow him. When he is in, you will stay at your window and watch his windows, the first floor, and his front door. Is that perfectly clear so far?"

More wonderingly yet, "Yes, Lucy."

"You will soon get to know his hours as well as he knows them himself. He is supposed to be attending a course at St. Nathaniel's. You will know at once if that is true, and if it is, of course you will follow him there and wait to follow him when he comes away. I need not tell you that you are to keep out of his sight. It is a private detective that you are to be, watching his movements; and every day, every day without one single failure, you are to write me a record of exactly what you have done and what you have seen. You understand?"

"Lucy——"

"You understand?"

"Yes, I understand, Lucy."

"Very well. There are movements that particularly you are to watch for and tell me in every detail. Of course you know Cadogan Place, near Sloane Square?"

"Yes, I know Cadogan Place, Lucy."

"Sir Pelham and Lady Heritage have taken a furnished house there for some months——"

Felix Pasture, as was his habit, had been standing before his sister with his eyes downcast. Her eyes were always too malignant for him to dare their gaze. Now, as she spoke of Sir Pelham and Lady Heritage, he slowly raised his eyes, deeply troubled, to her face.

She observed his action and she stopped her flow. "Well?"

He began. "Lucy——" and faltered before a second word.

"Have you anything to say?"

He had nothing, and she went on. "I do not know what number in Cadogan Place they will be at. When I do know, I will write and tell you; it does not greatly matter. What does matter, listen now, for this is the beginning and end of what I want from you, what does matter is the meetings that you will see between Banjo Heritage and Lady Heritage——"

Felix Pasture caught his breath. His eyes had come again to his sister's face and with his sharp inspiration they filled with an agony of entreaty.

She demanded. "What is it?"

"Lucy—am I to bring—to bring trouble on this, on this child?"

"Child? Child, do you call her?"

"Lucy, Lady Heritage is no more; a girl, a child to me. She has been very kind to me, Lucy. She has stopped and spoken to me. If she passes me on the tricycle in her car she stops. She—has shaken my hand, held my hand. She—Lucy, I implore of you. I——"

"Do you want me to tell Mother? Do you want me to send you to London and cut you off there and never let you return?"

He wipes his eyes.

"If you want me to, say so."

He is rubbing at his eyes. She goes on.

"Especially and above all, you are to tell me of their meetings, where they meet, where they go, how long they are together; and especially and above all that you are to tell me if she visits his flat. She will; make no doubt of that, and I am to know it, every first and last and possible word of it, with your watch in your hand how long she stays."

She stops, and as though she had just come through some

great labour stands there breathing heavily, her hands clenched at her sides, her glowing eyes upon the stricken man who wretchedly stands before her.

It is the labour of her emotions as she visualises the words she has just spoken that thus has taxed her; and the stricken man, before he leaves the room, is to know how charged with old, strong passions those emotions are.

"You can go," she says, "I will go through all this again before you leave"; and he shambles to the door, and at the door turns in a last appeal against betrayal of her who, as he says, has befriended him.

"Lucy, I do beg of you——"

"Do you want me to tell—— ?"

Beaten, he puts his hand to the door; but desperate withdraws it. "Lucy, in God's name what is it that you have against this child?"

Then she discharges her burden.

"Do you want to know? Shut the door. You shall know. Is it trouble do you fear that you are going to bring upon her? Well, then, know that it is you, you yourself who are responsible for any trouble you may bring; that but for you I think she never would have come into my path. This 'child' you call her! Do you ever remember that I was once a girl like that when you robbed us and robbed me of my girlhood, my youth, my beauty, of everything that was my right? Do you ever think of that? If you want to know what you have done to me by your wickedness — all that you have done you never can know — but if you want to know a little more of it, you shall know that but for you I might have stood, I would have stood, where that 'child' stands to-day, been Lady Heritage, been Pelham Heritage's wife. *You* caused me, in order to earn my bread, to be his housekeeper; *you* caused me to be his wards' governess. Pelham Heritage could not marry his housekeeper; Pelham Heritage could not marry his governess. If my position had

been different, he would never have turned to that child; he would never have looked further than me, who loved him. I hoped and I prayed on my knees to the last that he would realise my love for him and give me love; but I had been a paid dependent in his house and he turned from me, who would have made him all that his wife should be, to that 'child', who is giving herself to his drunkard brother. I had hoped to the last; but I was at their wedding and immediately I saw her I vowed it should not be the last. She has chosen to throw away what but for you might have been mine; now, through you, he shall throw her away and the last yet may——"

He is terrified before this terrible self-exposure. Self-exposure, merciless, to the dregs, in another always is terrible to the one who hears; here thrice terrible, and Felix Pasture, utterly terrified, puts out his hands to the door to shrink away.

It is time. She is beside herself. "Yes, go, go," she cries, "before I——"

He goes.

She throws herself upon a chair, winding her arms about her face, her tumults insupportable upon her feet.

CHAPTER VIII

OF CERTAIN IN LONDON

Two or three couple or so of Flogg-Wallopers usually tear themselves from their saddles for the inside of a week shortly before Christmas for the purpose of attending the Cattle Show at the Agricultural Hall in London. Beyond the fact that a fatted beast walks on four legs instead of on two, and that ultimately it or its kind will help quell the gnawings of starvation that ever are devouring him, no Flogg-Walloper has any particular interest in fatted beasts; but the visit was made regularly by some bygone Flogg-Walloper who has long since gone to ground and who presumably had an interest in fatted beasts and, in connection with anything that goes on four legs, even if it has horns, Flogg-Wallopers always do what Flogg-Wallopers have done. Lady Flogg-Walloper, moreover, justifies to herself a little shopping by reflecting that it is the show and not the shops for which she is missing a meet or two, and Sir Cropp justifies to himself the enormous meal he will eat at the dinner of the Smithfield Club and is therefore reasonably well content.

For one reason or another, a selection of Flogg-Wallopers go, anyway; and the physiologically male of the selection lean over the pens, well-beefed, red, hot, angry at the crowds, and gaze, speechless, at the exhibits; and the exhibits, red or brown, well-beefed, hot, equally angry, gaze speechless back at them; and there is an engaging exhibition of bull-headed ferocity, bull-headed bulk and bull-headed

aphonia on both sides of the barriers for those who may care to observe it.

An observer of the taste would, on the Christmastide following Banjo's departure to London (which was in September), have seen but a couple and a half of specimens on the human or Flogg-Walloper side of the rails, Rufford, the religious one, Sir Cropp and Lady Flogg-Walloper alone having made the adventure on this occasion; but he would have had the advantage of seeing them not only in profound contemplation at the pens, but in impassioned activity in the open had he followed them out on the afternoon of the opening day and beheld their endeavours, infuriated by the jostling crowds, maddened by the ceaseless din, to attract the attention of a taxi to bear them away to Claridge's where they are staying. Sir Cropp is buttoned to bursting point in a thick blue overcoat, and Rufford to the same point in a thick brown overcoat; and their gesticulations, in so far as, swaddled, they are able to move their arms, arouse in the drivers of the taxis which, engaged, go streaming by, and in those pedestrians who have the Londoner's keen appreciation of a free spectacle, a ribald and derisive mirth which in no measure tends to placate their feelings.

"There's no earthly good," brays Lady Flogg-Walloper in her hoarse note, "in waving to them when their flags are down."

"Blight their flags!" bawls Rufford, the religious one, down whose crimson face the perspirations of fury and of heat are blending in a single stream. "How the blazes can I see whether they're down or not, going by a hundred a minute!"

"Blight yourself!" stoutly returns Lady Flogg-Walloper, who has been in far too many mobs at the only jumpable place in a fence to lose readiness, when temporarily out of the saddle, in the Old World courtesies of the

hunting field; "I don't know to goodness why you and Cropp ever come to London," she goes on, "the way you lose your tempers any time you have to wait your turn."

At this moment Sir Cropp, who, a few paces away, for his own part shows evidence of having come to London for the purpose of having an apoplectic fit on the pavement, is observed to be amazedly gesticulating their attention towards a bus, rather as if it were a sea serpent or some other uncanny monster never previously seen in the streets of London, which, almost empty, has momentarily paused before him; and "Yes, let's get into that damned thing", cries Rufford, with the passionate fervour found only in the deeply religious, "wherever it goes"; and in a moment the couple and a half of Flogg-Wallopers, who never before have travelled in a damned thing of this particular description, are aligned within the doorway of the bus, Rufford first, Lady Flogg-Walloper next, Sir Cropp behind; and in the next the bus has shot forward with a convulsive jerk and so has Rufford, and Lady Flogg-Walloper after him, in a stimulating little rush up the length of the vehicle, to be checked as stimulatingly, the religious one by the front of the bus, and Lady Flogg-Walloper by the back of the religious one, almost flattening him through the boarding; whence they rebound, as violently, into seats and collapse there, considerably discomposed, Lady Flogg-Walloper venting her discomposure in very loud "Pah's!", and the religious one his in muttered prayer touching locomotion in London, though whether that of himself up the bus or that of the bus with himself in it is not clearly to be distinguished.

Sir Cropp, meanwhile, who has saved himself from participation in the stimulating rush of his companions by clutching at the jamb of the doorway, but has entirely lost his balance in doing so, has descended with stunning violence

onto one of the seats for three, occupied before his arrival by two passengers, one at each extremity, and now, for all the visible appearance that is left of them, occupied entirely by Sir Cropp.

"Quick things, these buses, sir," says the passenger buried on his left, managing to extricate himself a little, and genially unruffled by the avalanche which has descended upon him. He is a middle-aged, military-looking, country-squireish-looking man, and he appears to recognise in Sir Cropp another of the blood and to be, in any case, chattily inclined. "If you aren't accustomed to them," he adds chattily.

Sir Cropp, whose mind grinds slowly but grinds exceeding small, and is occupied at present to the exclusion of all else in grinding over what the devil it is he is sitting upon on his other flank, has no place whatsoever for this observation, and there comes to him next the deep bray of Lady Flogg-Walloper, shouting towards him from the far end of the vehicle.

"Take mighty good care we come in a car from the hotel to-morrow afternoon," she brays, "and have it wait for us. PAH!"

Sir Cropp who, either from inability to comment adequately on what he thinks of the whole proceedings or from inability, for, buttoned up as he is, he cannot turn his head more than two inches, to discover what the *devil* it is he is sitting on on his right, appears likely at any moment to burst, does not, however, burst, but shows signs that if he tried to reply he probably would; and the chatty passenger, taking up for him the matter of the car, chats in again. "Ha, and then you will have a job to find it," chats he. "Appalling thing this London traffic when you are not accustomed to it. I'm from the shires myself."

Sir Cropp, tilted towards him by the unfathomable mystery of what the *devil* it is he is sitting on on his right,

and therefore able to look at him, is aroused by the word "shires", and astoundingly breaks into loquacity.

"D'ye hunt?" demands Sir Cropp, the first words he has spoken since concluding his light luncheon at Claridge's three hours before.

"No, I'm not a hunting man," returns the chatty passenger, "I——"

But whatever else he may be he is constrained to keep to himself, for, not hunting, he is, so far as Sir Cropp is concerned, not in the bus at all; and Sir Cropp, heaving himself forward a little, turns, purple with the effort, to discover once and for all what the *devil* this is that he is sitting on on his right.

It is, as his eyes, nearly leaping out of his head at the discovery, inform him, a smartly blue-suited, bowler-hatted little man, wearing remarkably large yellow moustaches and a remarkably dingy collar, who has sat petrified with terror ever since he saw Sir Cropp entering unto him and has remained urgent to escape but totally unable to move ever since the bulk that once plunged him eighteen feet across a room and headfirst through the door panel beyond, and from which in the House of Lords he had extracted damages and costs, first entombed him where he sits.

The recognition, as Miss Mention would have written, is mutual. As if caused by the straining from their sockets of his eyes, a slight foam appears at the corners of Sir Cropp's mouth, as if causing the alarming protrusion of his eyes, convulsive tremors begin to agitate his body. It is enough, too much, for Paddock. The convulsive tremors, carrying forward the stupendous movement by which the whole bulk had been turned towards him, enable him at last to extricate himself. He does so. He springs to his feet. He springs in one bound to the conductor's platform. He launches himself in one wild bound, reckless of traffic, into

the open heart of that great metropolis, could he once visit which he never would want another treat in all his life, not if he lived to be a hundred years of age, sir.

And, "Sir", says Paddock, bouncing through the door of Banjo's sitting room rather as if he had been shot in from a trap half an hour later and springing smartly to attention beside the table at which Banjo is seated, "Sir, Sir Cropp and Lady Flogg-Walloper——"

"I wish to goodness," says Banjo, looking up irritably from the medical textbook and the notebook beside it which he is studying, "that you would not always come into this room with that damned hat on your head." He puts out his hand to the tumbler in front of him and drinks from it. "Take it off," he says sharply.

Banjo looks different for his three months in London, or for what he has been doing there. He is different. He is perceptibly thinner and paler. The lines of his face which in Parva presented themselves as pleasant lines, figuring often his whimsical smile, here show themselves as marks of strain, of tension, deepening frequently into a setting of quick irritability.

He is working hard, he is drinking hard, he is loving with every force that is in his body.

He is meeting Dawn almost every day.

His feet are upon the edge of his precipice.

He drinks from his glass again, and appears, this time, to be a little the more mollified of it, though irritated still.

"That perpetual hat of yours," he says, "did not seem to matter so much down at the cottage. Here we seem to be more shut in or something"—he gives a restless movement as though he feels confinement about him and repeats the phrase—"more shut in or something and it gets on my nerves. Don't do it."

"Sir," says Paddock, quivering with righteous excuse, "sir, in the army, sir, a man is rated as undressed if he appears without his hat and may not salute, sir. In the army, sir——"

"Yes, well, you are not in the army now and you are not asked to salute, anyway. Leave your head out of the dashed hat sometimes; it wants air, the way you go leaping about in this place doing nothing that I can see. Do you know that again I had to go and fill that seltzogene under the tap when I came in?"

"Sir," said Paddock, tears starting into his eyes at this aspersion, "sir, that rotten old seltzogene leaks, sir. Sir, that seltzogene was standing in a pool of water when I got up this morning, took me ten minutes to mop up and clean, sir. Sir, when I was in the army, in the officers' mess in the South African war, sir, I suppose there wasn't below thousands of seltzogenes I handled, sir. Sir, that rotten old seltzogene——"

"Oh, damn the seltzogene," said Banjo. "You're never satisfied. When you're supplied with a coffin you'll wake up and blame the undertaker. What was it you were saying about Sir Cropp Flogg-Walloper?"

Paddock dashed from his eyes the tears produced in them by the infamous behaviour of the seltzogene and presented in them instead the glitter of one who brings great news. "Sir," said he quivering now with information, "Sir Cropp and Lady Flogg-Walloper are in the great metropolis, sir."

"Well, so are we," returned Banjo. "What about it?"

"Sir," cried Paddock, shining with the enthusiasm of one to whom has been revealed a great amazement, "sir, isn't it an extraordinary thing, sir, that here in this great teeming, roaring metropolis with I suppose billions of people and streets and houses, adding one to another, sir, me and

another up from the same teeny, tiny little rurality should meet face to face, sir?"

Banjo drew his books towards him. "Astounding," he said drily and moved things about in search of his pencil.

"Sir," cried Paddock, trembling with the amazement of the thing as he unfolded it further, "sir, it was in a motor-coach, sir."

Banjo put out his hand to his pencil, discovered. "Motor-coach? What on earth were Sir Cropp and Lady Flogg-Walloper doing in a motor-coach?"

"With a bell-punch conductor, sir."

Banjo gave a grunt. "Well, bell-punch yourself out of the room. I'm busy; and I wish to goodness you wouldn't call a bus a motor-coach, nor London the metropolis."

"Sir," said Paddock, passing over this in a last despairing effort to arouse enthusiasm, "sir, I never was more surprised in the whole of my life, sir. They was coming out of the Cattle Show, sir——"

"The Cattle Show!" The word struck a chord that had been in Banjo's mind and he looked up quickly. "Had you been to the show?"

"Sir, I had not, sir. I had just been riding in the coach to see more of the sights of the great metropolis, sir. Sir, Sir Cropp and Lady Flogg-Walloper had been there, yes; and if you should wish to see them are going again to-morrow, sir."

Banjo's voice was peremptory. The chord that had been touched was vibrating. "How do you know that?"

"Sir, I heard Lady Flogg-Walloper tell Sir Cropp that to-morrow afternoon they would come in a car from their hotel, sir."

"Go!" said Banjo definitely.

There was that about his tone that caused Paddock this time to do as bid; and there was that about Banjo's demeanour as, alone, he sat looking fixedly before him, the hand

that had gone out to the pencil empty, clenched, that bespoke a great intensity upon the matter that the presence of the Flogg-Wallopers at the Cattle Show had put into his mind — Dawn. For some time past, meetings with Dawn had been increasingly difficult to effect. For a fortnight he had not seen her; in a few days Pelham was taking her for Christmas, not to Great House, where, if himself went down to Parva meeting was easy, but to Piers, where it would not be easy. Here, in this news from Paddock, was a means of seeing her, and, seeing her, of bringing her here and telling her —

His tightened fist went tighter. He took notepaper from a drawer and wrote:

Dawn, by the merest chance I have heard that Sir Cropp and Lady Flogg-Walloper are in town and will be at the Cattle Show to-morrow, where you, as I know, are to be with Pelham, and they are sure to be staying a few days, they always do when they come up. Dawn, see Lady Flogg tomorrow and ask her to insist to Pelham that you lunch alone with her the following day, Thursday, that will be. Pelham will consent. He might not for anybody else, but he is afraid of the Flogg. And Dawn, ask Lady Flogg first to invite you in front of Pelham and then — not to expect you! You need not tell her anything more. She is an old brick. She knows what Pelham is, and she loves you, and will think it is just some lark you are up to. And then, Dawn, meet me at the usual place at 1.0.

Dawn, it will be no great lark in actual fact — not for me at any rate. I have something very especial to tell you, Dawn, and I want to bring you here after we have had lunch to tell you quietly. BANJO

He gazed upon the letter a very long time after he had written it; not reading it; reviewing instead, first clenched again, the matters that had led up to it.

Meetings with Dawn, easy when, with Pelham, she first came up to town, latterly had become difficult because Pelham had become — difficult. Pelham did not know, so far as Dawn was aware, that Banjo was in London, and, after that last scene with him touching Banjo and the car driving, she had not been disposed to tell him; but he seemed recently to have become as it might be, but as Dawn did not think it exactly was, suspicious of her movements when away from him. He had changed recently in the most curious way, she said. He seemed to have lost interest in the things that formerly absorbed him. He sat about doing nothing. Formerly he went his way, immersed in it, and she went hers. Now he appeared, as it were, to have no way to go. He seemed to be watching her and to be occupied only in watching her; and that restricted, somehow, the freedom of movement which formerly she had. When he was about his own affairs she could be about hers. Now, not so.

"He is suspicious," Banjo had said; but, pondering this change in Pelham, and pondering it especially in this fortnight during which he had not seen Dawn, in his heart he did not believe that it was suspicion. Pelham, if suspicious, was not a man to sit and brood over it, or to sit and brood for that matter about anything which he was accustomed to handle. He would demand, command, act. No, Banjo had the troubled fear that it was some emotion, not high as love — for Pelham, self-centered, self-satisfied surely was not capable of love — but worthier than suspicion, which, if it existed in Pelham's attitude to Dawn, destroyed the balance of a picture of Dawn which, in these months in London, subconsciously he had constructed.

He found that he had come somehow — this was his picture — not to think of her as belonging to another man, as Pelham's wife; and to understand him — if those not so virtuous and upright as ourselves deserve to be understood — the processes out of which the picture had arisen

may be traversed. Out of his own relations to her, first careless playmate then wise counsellor, and out of her trustful acceptance of him as these; out of Pelham's attitude towards her, in part tutorial, schoolmasterly, in part seemingly indifferent, neglectful, wrapped in himself; and out of her drifting away from such as a lonely child without companions or as a neglected child unwanted in her home —out of the combination of these had emerged to Banjo one who did not appear to belong to another, one who was become again that twilight, a timid fawn, whose ethereal loveliness had called to him before he knew her for Pelham's bride and who now, as now he had come to feel, stood glimmering there, belonging to none, for him to turn which way he would: if he pressed his love upon her, to himself; if he maintained his part of the old, wise one, the counsellor, to—to what? To one capable of feeling no more towards her than towards any other of the rare pieces of his collections; to one who, if he lost her, would suffer not in his heart but only in his pride.

"And," Banjo, arrived here, would say to himself, drinking from his glass and setting it down with a blow, "what is Pelham's pride to me? Good for him that he should writhe in it, damn him!"

But now, disturbing the balance of this picture, profoundly troubling him who balanced it, was presented by Dawn a Pelham somehow changed, a Pelham watching her with some emotion other than the emotions aroused in him by his collections; not suspicion, concern of some kind, and concern sufficient to lose him his concern in all his other interests. A Pelham, then, capable of concern about the fawn; a fawn, then, not ownerless but valued; a keeper, then, who, if he lost it, conceivably might suffer not only in his pride but in his heart?

The more Banjo, in this fortnight without sight of Dawn, pondered that, the more the balance of the picture

was destroyed. Twilight, the timid fawn, glimmering there unowned, unloved, companionless, faded; Dawn who was Pelham's wife, stood there. The balanced picture had let him lull away, blindfold, delude, his spirit come on deck, as he had told Quest, to guide him to the going forward — forward to giving up; this disturbance of the picture awoke, unbandaged, undeceived that pilot on the bridge.

His clenched fist, lying now on the letter he had written, clenched tighter. The old amused detachment of his attitude towards Pelham, hardening in these months in London, in this fortnight, was utterly gone. He had been passive towards Pelham; he now was active towards him. He loured upon the thought of Pelham, as men before and since Bathsheba's husband have been loured upon, because he was the husband of his wife; and he blamed Pelham because, if Pelham had not been what he was, self-absorbed, self-satisfied, Dawn had not come drifting to him and these things that had come to pass never had threatened. On that day, years before, when first he had seen Dawn's portrait and had thought of Pelham in connection with her, "Bless him!" he whimsically had toasted him. Now, when across his thought there fell, as now there always fell, the shadow of Pelham, "Damn him!" his invocation was. He hated Pelham.

More strongly yet his fist upon the letter constricted. It might have been the hand grasping the rail of one who watches from the bridge his ship driving into peril of Scylla and Charybdis, on one side the Scylla of leaving Dawn to Pelham and losing her, on the other the Charybdis of taking her from Pelham — and losing both herself and himself. He did not believe that Dawn loved him; but he was convinced that, let him but open his arms to her, press his love upon her, and very soon, her thoughts turned thusward, she would come to him. His determination, over whose issue by this letter he sat as one debating the signing of a

warrant, was that he would bring her here where he could speak quietly to her, proclaim his love for her, warn her, if he had strength, against the sin he offered her, and leave the rest with who should rule it — heaven or hell.

Drink was left in his glass and he drained it.

He folded, sealed and addressed the letter, then went out, bareheaded, to post it at the corner.

Hatless, he did not necessitate movement by the watcher from the window of Number Ninety-seven. The stricken man who watched there sighed only, wearily glanced at the time, and noted.

CHAPTER IX

LUKE SQUARE: BREAKING POINT

Dawn found Lady Flogg-Walloper at the show, took her aside and asked her — to be invited to lunch; not to be expected.

Lady Flogg-Walloper gave first a loud bark of amusement, "Haw!" then a keen look. "And then not to expect you! Haw! That's pretty good! Haw!" Then the keen look. "Course I'll do it for you, my dear; course. But, Dawn, what is it? Only straight larks, my dear, only straight larks?"

Dawn flushed. "Only straight larks, Lady Flogg."

Lady Flogg saw the flush. She put a solid arm round Dawn and with the leg-of-mutton fist at the end of it pressed her where it held. "Walk a pace," she said; and then, as they walked, "Look, Dawn, my dear, I'm all one for straight larks, always have been and had more than a few when I was less like a gorilla to look at than I am now. But not the other stuff, Dawn. Can't abide it. Maybe you've heard the joke against me that I'm going to be buried in my habit with my saddle at my feet, and 'tis true; but, Dawn, I'm going to have a Bible under my head; that's arranged in my will too, and it's the Bible that stands by my bed every night of my life and that I stuff in my hunting-kit bag every time I go a day into another country. I don't read it, my dear, haven't opened it in a score of years, but it was my mother's Bible and she read it and I just keep it there

to have a nod at night and morning, just to remind me that the straight game is the right game. There's a lot of this other stuff about now, Dawn, my dear, and no one's thought any the worse for it, far as I can see, which is mighty different from when I was a gal; and there's gals like you has a flick at it and then another flick and then keeps on flicking and don't reckon they're any the worse for it. But, Dawn, you take it from me, my dear, they're not the better and they all find, soon or late, they're not the happier. There's only one way to ride huntin', Dawn, and that's to ride straight; and there's only one way to live happy, Dawn, my dear, and that's to live straight. You stick to your horse, which I mean believe in him and trust in him, and he'll see you through; and you stick to your man and play straight with him, and he'll be the best man you'll ever meet, no matter who comes into the stable, and see you through. Your Pelham's a fool but he's not near such a fool as my Cropp; but my Cropp's mine and your Pelham's yours, and we'll never better 'em, either of us."

She gave Dawn with her arm a hug and with her leg-of-mutton a squeeze that left tenderness for a considerable time thereafter, and broke off with, "Come along and let's fix this lunch you aren't going to have, my dear, and just put what I've been bleating at you in your nosebag and nibble a mouthful now an' again at the lunch you are going to have. See?"

Dawn nibbled. She did more. Beginning with the moment when Lady Flogg-Walloper, returning her to Pelham, left her alone with him; she ate and digested from the nosebag. "You stick to your man and play straight with him, and he will be the best man you'll ever meet, no matter who comes into the stable, and see you through."

It never had occurred to her that she was not playing straight with Pelham. As in the case of Banjo's balanced picture, so with her own conception of her picture in which Banjo stood, such had been the curious development at once of her relations with Banjo on the one hand and with Pelham on the other, that the position that now, since these months in London, had come about between herself and Banjo somehow had not seemed to touch Pelham. Starting as brother-in-law, Banjo had for so long companioned her as merry, idle, irresponsible brother that the merging of her affection for him thus into the deeper feeling that now he drew out of her — not love, she would have said, but a tenderness towards him that trembled, she might have admitted, upon the edge of love — had given her no sense of wrong, of guilt; and starting within fewest weeks of marriage by withdrawing himself into preoccupations, routine, of the existence of which she had had no smallest prevision, Pelham had so quickly and so completely merged away out of her planes of thought into his own planes of thought that he had become as it were an inanimate habitant of her existence, not credited with feelings and gradually therefore not calculated with in the expressions or the tendencies of her own feelings. If she had married him because she had loved him it was impossible that he could have become thus inanimate in her regard: she would have remembered the feelings that she once had had for him. But she had not married him because she loved him; she had married him in gratitude for his escapement of her from all in which she pined to all in which she yearned to flower — and he had deprived her of that flowering.

She had been between as it were playfellow and guardian; and there was no not playing straight with Pelham in that. In running with Banjo she had been

breaking bounds, no more, just as a schoolboy will break bounds; and that — which is its attraction — may be against the rules but has not necessarily any wrong in it done when out of bounds, and, of Banjo's merry irresponsibility, she had neither done nor thought wrong. Insensibly to her, light friendship had merged into an attachment deeper based; out of which, drifting, she had drawn support; into which, moved also to give support, she had poured a tender pity; and as insensible of danger, of wrong, of not playing straight with Pelham, she had continued — breaking bounds. And then, reinforcing all this — no background! The inability of lawless youth, backgroundless, to realise the pain to parents of neglect, of the "I did not ask to be born" status, here was the inability of one, backgroundless, to realise possibility of pain given to husband, wrong done to him.

Now, from Lady Flogg-Walloper's rough kindly nosebag a sudden glimpse of what perhaps it was that she was at.

And the glimpse, much intensifying it, had been afforded to her just at a time when, as she had told Banjo, she was noticing a change in Pelham. Ever since that afternoon of the sequel to the motoring incident, when she had cried out that exclamation at him, she had noticed it. It was a quietude, a sudden loss of force, laxing of tone — no more; but in him who above all else had been a spirit dominant, uncompromising, imperious, austere, a thing very strange. He appeared as it were to have abdicated, resigned office, laid up his sword; and like a sovereign, a statesman or a captain who has gone into retirement, to sit brooding upon the past. Something was on his mind. Suspicion, Banjo had called it, and to a point she had agreed; but when, as often, she

caught his eyes fixed broodingly upon her it was not precisely suspicion that she saw in them. Suspicion has a hard look. The look that he bent upon her was sometimes, she thought, a troubled look, sometimes a defeated look.

But what had he to trouble him, wherein suffered defeat? He had longed all his life for Piers, for all that Piers contained and all that it brought; and Piers at last was his. How troubled? The nosebag gave a new idea — was it that he conceived he was not being played straight with? But that came back again to suspicion; and this, looking at it across the nosebag, she now was assured was trouble, not suspicion.

And suddenly, at this immediate point of her reflections, it struck into her with sense of shock that it was trouble, not about her, for that was suspicion, but for her; and that, she stared upon it spellbound — was that love?

Yes, it was love. Pelham when, twice, he had said to Dawn " Because I love you dearly " had spoken truth. Overwrought, she had taken it on the first occasion as a sudden and unexpected bewilderment, utterly undoing her; on the second as no more than the correct thing to say which, always correct, naturally he would say. But it was true. How other than in truth can " Because I love you " be uttered between two who, by parentage or by marriage, are already bound? It may be uttered in deception or in self-deception by one who, desirous of another, uses it for his own ends; but between brother and brother, parent and child, husband and wife the bond has been already made and tested and there neither is nor can be need for deception of that kind. Pelham loved Dawn fondly and on that first of those two occasions of

his telling her so the tears had rushed into her eyes because she was what he knew her to be, and loved her for, a childlike spirit, freshly and delicately beautiful as a child within as without; easily to be directed this way or that, to right or to wrong, as a child; as a child emotionally responsive. But tears, as in that place was written, are a breaking and an appeal to break with them; and who cannot break of himself, by appeal to him, is in some danger one day of being broken.

Pelham could not break; he now was in process of that danger.

When on that second occasion of his telling her "Because I loved you fondly" she had cried out, mouthing that which she had been taught, "It was because I was young, fresh, beautiful — because you desired me", he had been utterly shocked, worse, pained to the very depths of his love; and he had been shocked, stabbed, as only can be one who deeply loves and who perceives in the loved one a stain, a canker, a worm within the rose that had not been believed to be possible.

And he was constitutionally as incapable of dealing with this discovery as with those tears.

The same quality was desired of him, a breaking, a going-out to the victim of these breakings, of the tears, of the canker; and the same disability only was present in him, a dumbfounding at the spectacle of the conflagration, not an arousing by its causes; an inhibition by the blow of the circumstance, not a quickening to remedy it. He withdrew. He withdrew from his occupations and his interests, from his art absorptions and from his estate absorptions, from the affairs that crowded about him in his inheritance of Piers and from the activities that crowded about him in the affairs with which men whom he met in London daily were engaged, and sat

aside and watched her; watching for new and further signs of this canker in her loveliness and, infinitely grieved, believing that he observed them. He was as a mother who knows her son fallen among evil companions and dreads the marks of it; as a father who perceives his daughter adrift and is agonized at what seas she is encountering; as a husband whose wife, much loved, has left him and who dreads what change he shall see in her if he sees her again.

What reason for this tarnishment of Dawn, he brooded. What rescue? And, brooding still, on that same afternoon on which Dawn was, as he supposed, with Lady Flogg-Walloper, went, for want of a better thing to do, to a dealer in Chelsea who had written to him of a picture that he might like to see.

He was not particularly in mood to see the picture or any picture; but he found himself nowadays never greatly disposed for his interest in art; and to-day, when he should have been with Dawn but for that Lady Flogg-Walloper, would do as well as another. Six months ago he would have gone swiftly to see this picture, in a car, thinking of it and of its companion works by the artist as he rode. Now he went slowly, walking, and it was a long way, "Troubled," Dawn had thought of his aspect; "defeated"; and troubled was he and defeated as he walked — examining his trouble this way and that, conning his defeat from this and that and every angle in search of light upon it. But, when he reached where he was bound the wound of his trouble was no better healed, the problem of his defeat no better solved, than when he had left the club where he had lunched and whence he had started.

What reason for this tarnishment of Dawn? What rescue?

The art dealer, when Pelham arrived, was a few minutes away, expected momentarily. Would he wait? There was the picture.

Yes, he would wait.

He sat before the picture a little while, his eyes upon it, his thoughts on Dawn. What reason? What rescue? The picture could not answer.

He turned from it and took up a newspaper lying beside him. It was so folded as to present to him an inner page, decorated, after the fashion of the popular Press, which was not his Press, with a huge headline running half across its width and with a large portrait framed in the article that stood beneath it. The headline and its appendage said:

THEY HAVE NO BACKGROUND!

By Father Absolute.

Father Absolute? Pelham, like Lady Vestibule, prided himself on never forgetting a name. A reminiscence was touched here, and in a single pucker of the brows he had it. Father Absolute was one of the men under whom that vicar at Ashton Parva had said he had served. He dropped his eyes to the portrait. The portrait showed him an old man of face singularly benign, singularly capable, singularly strong. A fine face, admittedly, for a man at whose title of Father instinctively he had taken, and took, offence. He looked at the caption beneath it.

Father Absolute, whose campaign in explanation of the tendencies of modern youth, conducted from an old chapel, at one time a furniture repository, in which he has installed himself in Rigg Street, Chelsea, is arousing such widespread interest and giving such comfort alike to youth and to those elders who despair of youth.

Pelham had had the paper idly in one hand. He took it strongly now in both and began to read the article.

He was still reading it, but for the third time, when the dealer whose " few minutes " had had the expansion customary with all men absent thus short from their offices, returned. The dealer found him indifferently interested in the picture. His manner was abstracted, his comments trite, his questions perfunctory. He would come again, he said; just now he was rather pressed for time. But he did not, by the way he walked to the door, appear to be pressed; he walked with the slow, meditative tread of one profoundly meditating and at the door, refusing a taxi, stood a moment in thought. Then he said: " Do you know Rigg Street? Is that anywhere near here? "

" It very much is," the dealer told him. " Second on the right, just down there." He pointed. " There's plenty asking for Rigg Street last few months. There's an old monk or something, one of those chaps goes about in a long gown with one of those funny little caps on his head, set up there and —— "

" Thank you," said Pelham. " I will find it."

He found the street; he found quite easily the old chapel, at one time a furniture repository. It stood back from the pavement a few feet, inclosed from it by a low wall and railing, and showed built against it a small room, as it were a vestry. To the door of this was affixed a piece of paper, a handwritten notice; and Pelham, come into the enclosure, stepped to it and read it.

FATHER ABSOLUTE

Office Hours: All hours, day or night.
Walk right in
If he's asleep, wake him.

Pelham turned the handle and walked in.

Banjo at the same moment was walking the floor of his sitting room, pacing it before Dawn, who sat on the sofa from which, releasing her hands, he had just arisen to conduct her out. She was going. She should have been gone this hour. He had said that which he had brought her here to say.

Meeting, they had gone for lunch to the secluded little restaurant of their custom. Both had been very quiet at the meal: he for what it was that he had to tell her, which he knew, and feared: she for what it was she was to hear, which she did not know, but, arisen out of her amazed conjecture upon the meaning of the change in Pelham, fearfully surmised. When first she had received Banjo's letter, his particular reason for the making of this appointment, that he had something very especial to tell her, had as it were gone in with the whole burthen of the letter and been lost in it. They had been unable to meet for a fortnight; it had appeared more than probable no way of meeting would arise in the few days before she went with Pelham to Piers; the opportunity presented by the Lady Flogg-Walloper chance was obviously one to be jumped at; and his assertion that it would be no great lark, not for him at any rate, had ridden her smilingly over the "something very especial to tell." That touch, the no great lark, not for him at any rate, was the characteristic Banjo, whimsically rueful over some mischance that had befallen him which was no doubt the especial thing he had to tell. He was always saying things like that in his letters; once he had used the very same words "something very important to tell you" and when, on their meeting, she had inquired as to it, he had

laughed in his boyish way and said that it was only to make sure of inducing her to come. Dear Banjo!

But immediately with the rushing upon her of that amazing thought, that Pelham's manifestation of trouble was trouble not about her because he suspected she was doing something against his tastes and wishes, but trouble for her, which was concern for her, which was affection for her — immediately with that she saw Banjo, and saw herself seen of Banjo, with new eyes, and his warning in his letter of something especially important that he had to tell with new meaning. For years past she had credited Pelham with no emotions whatsoever, least of all the emotion of love. He had said to her "Because I love you" and it had been to her no more than any other of his precise, considered phrases uttered on whatever occasion. In the circumstances in which he had said it he would have considered it "the thing to say" and therefore would have said it, his speech governed by the thing to say just as his whole life was governed by the thing one has to do or the kind of thing one does not do. But now he had not said it but — the more she thought upon it the surer she became — had looked it; and immediately, from being an indifferent guardian whose bounds she heedlessly broke, and from being an emotionless automaton devoid of feelings, he became a living factor in her life charged with emotion — and immediately emotion arose and ran all through her line: to Banjo, to her comradeship with Banjo, to Banjo's attitude to her. All changed! Pelham changed, Banjo changed, herself changed. What had hurt no one now hurt some one and immediately all were affected. All had been as it were insulated; one now was quickened and immediately, as now she saw it, all were quickened. All charged! Pelham charged,

Banjo charged, herself charged. But herself charged to what? She did not know. She dreaded to discover.

They came from the restraint of their lunch to the isolation of Banjo's rooms and with his first word almost she was put to discovery.

Paddock was out for the day, he told her, as they went up the stairs. " And, my goodness," said he, having added some words on Paddock that made her laugh (glad to laugh), " Do you remember him and his eggs the first time, which was also the last time, you came into a room of mine? "

That made her laugh anew, gaily. " Oh, shall I ever forget it! " and he had opened the door of his sitting room and she passed in.

" Bit different," he called — he was hanging up his greatcoat in the passage — " from my Parva boudoir? "

She was standing, back to door, looking about her, still smiling. " Banjo, ever so different! Nice enough, in fact, jolly nice, but —— "

But he was come up to her and interrupted her. " Dawn, look at me. This is what I have brought you here to tell you. Dawn, I love you."

Her smile, as though the long, slow breath she drew submerged it in the swell of trouble that tided on her face, died on her lips. She put her hand to her heart and her breath, gently released, went from her as it had been a moan, " Oh, Banjo! "

He chose the right word for what he saw. He said, " Dawn, have I dismayed you? "

Still with her hand against her heart, " Oh, Banjo, this is terrible," she said.

" How terrible? "

Her hand fell away to her side. It dropped as though without volition of her own, trailing her bosom and her skirt, signalising a collapse and tumbling down of what had been stable, firm, enduring; and her voice made the sound of its fall. " Banjo, what happens now? "

He put out both his hands. " Give me your hands. Come, and I will tell you what now happens."

He drew her to the sofa and sat beside her, holding her hands.

" Do you love me, Dawn? "

Tears were in her eyes. " Banjo, I love you dearly, dearly — but, Banjo, not like that."

He said, " I am content. Are you crying because you think you have hurt me, Dawn? There is no need. Let me wipe those dear eyes." He put one arm around her and with his other hand took from her bag her handkerchief and holding her against him wiped her eyes. Then he put the handkerchief to his lips. " I am kissing your tears, not you, though I could and you would let me. Would not you let me kiss you if I asked you? "

She did not answer.

He said, " Dawn, I am content not to kiss you — yet; content that you only love me as I know you do and not as I love you — not yet; because I know that you have never thought of me like this, because I have shut your eyes. Now I am opening them. I love you, Dawn; I love you; I love you."

Her eyes had been almost closed. Within his arm about her she lay back, almost as if she swooned there. Now as if the deep vibration of his voice drew up her lids she opened them and looked at him and he knew that, as he had said, in a deeper sense he was opening them. She had not known she loved him: beneath the urgency of his love, calling to hers as in a forest, mate calling

mate, as in a communion of souls, soul calling soul, love that she had not known was waking.

"Now I am opening them," he said again, and her eyes, unable to maintain his gaze, withdrew. "Dawn, I love you so body and soul of me that I love you more than my honour and I think there is only one step a man can love more than that. Dawn, listen. 'What happens now?' you ask. This is what happens now. I love you more than my honour; but, Dawn, not more than yours."

Again she raised her eyes to his, this time in question.

He said, "If I put down my lips on your most lovely lips, Dawn, I could draw love, honour, all, all of you, body and soul, as certainly as the moon draws the tides, as the sun moisture from the seas. Could I not?"

Her murmur came, "Oh, Banjo, do not."

He released her and turning from her put his head between his hands, his elbows on his knees. "I knew it," he said. "I have always known it."

She put out her hands and caught his wrists. "Banjo, most dear Banjo!"

He slipped his hands about hers and turned to her. "Dawn that I worship, soul and body, heart and mind, there is no smallest fear for you to have. Dawn, if I had the common honour that in a million men all but a single man has, I never would have told you that I loved you. I have not that honour. I am the one vile in a million honourable."

"Banjo, you are the dearest, best."

He turned upwards the palms of her hands and put down to them his face, burning, and pressed them against his face. Then he raised his face. "Dawn, to be blind and be dishonourable, to be devoid of sense or right and so to be dishonourable, I think excuse may go

to that. But to see clearly, to know perfectly well what you are doing and then to do the dishonourable thing, that goes beyond all vileness; there can be no excuse for that."

"Dear Banjo, you have done nothing wrong."

"Dawn, unutterable wrong, because I have only told you what I have told you in order to put wrong in your beloved way who, but for my telling you of my love, never had thought of wrong. Dawn, this is it, this what happens. You go back now. It is on Tuesday, is it not, you go to Piers? On Monday I am going to Parva. On Thursday, a week to-day, we will arrange to meet. You go now, and between now and then think, think terribly, Dawn, of what I have told you and what it is that now I offer you: to come away with me, Dawn, across the sea somewhere; and, Dawn, think terribly of what it is that, if you come, you will lose. On Thursday I will ask for your decision. Dawn, if your decision is that you will come to me, I shall gain you; you, you will lose everything, Dawn — your honour, your purity, your real, your inner happiness. You will have wronged a man, Dawn, and I tell you, I the old and wise one, who myself am wronging him worse than you would be but who am beyond caring for that and have been beyond it years, that if you wrong a man you will never forget it, never, never; never be wholly and utterly happy again, never, never, never. Dawn, let my words sink in, because next time I come to you, for your answer, there will be no words like these. This is my last fight ever — a miserable fight, God knows, but at least a resistance of taking you with your eyes shut, when I might; at least a putting of you away from me, eyes open, until I come to you again and find perhaps that I may not. No words like these next time, Dawn. I shall only take if you will only give. My darling, listen to them now then."

He talked to her a long time. The brief December light,

faltering before the London gloom, withdrew, and with it passed the passion that had been in his voice. He was the very old and wise one once again, as he had been a hundred times, advising her gently, simply for her good. One overhearing him — his face shadowed in the shadows that hung as misty curtains all about the room, his tone softened, levelled, as instinctively the voice takes hush as vision fades — had thought him gentle counsellor, not lover; and she forgot. What he had called up in her when, his lips near hers, "Oh, Banjo, do not" she had faltered, ebbed from her, returning her to the old tenderness for him only; what he had presented himself as, breathing "I love you, love you, soul and body of me, heart and mind", passed and he was returned to her as the dear confidant, wisest, dearest friend. She sat quite silent, profound in thought; conscious of his presence only as one, stirring in sleep, comfortingly is conscious of one dearly loved there also; hearing his voice only as is heard in reverie hushed music that has precipitated and that maintains the reverie.

"Come, Dawn," and he has left her and is at the door, waiting her. "Dawn, come now, you must not stay a moment more;" and she stirs from her profundity of thoughts, arises out of them, goes from them to him and speaks to him out of that with which they have invested her, lifting her face to him.

"Banjo, that kiss just now you spoke of when I said 'Banjo, do not.' Not with that kiss, Banjo, but with the kiss I would have given you at any time before, just kiss me, Banjo dear, with that because I love you as I told you that I loved you. Just kiss me, Banjo;" and, not touching her with his hands, he bends to her, and kisses her.

And they go out and are not watched of him who watched them enter and who, wearily at his window, has watched for them to come upon the street again. A telegram is brought

him as they come down the stairs. As they emerge upon the street he is standing holding the opened message in hands seized of a dreadful shaking:

"Come at once. Mother is dying."

CHAPTER X

BREAKING POINT: ASHTON PARVA

When David Quest, on the morning of the day that was to have seen Banjo's departure to London, turned to re-enter his church with the dejected droop of the shoulders that Banjo had seen, he turned to a desolation of mind and of body of whose profound depths, of whose gaunt spectres, of whose grim torture chambers, only Roddy of all living persons had idea. When, a week later, he was beheld of Medwyn Paradise returning with Small David from the Bishop who knew not Joseph, he was returning, dogged by that wolf whose names were poverty, frustration, isolation, not in the accustomed depths but in deeper depths, whose existence, gone so low as for so long he had been, himself had not thought possible.

"Holding the fort!" he bravely had said to Banjo; "God's fort!" he fiercely had cried to Medwyn Paradise; "Roddy, Roddy!" he brokenly would utter to Roddy, when, seated alone with her, her hand would come stealing into his silence, into his pit of his fears.

The man was starving. He was starved of bodily sustenance, of proper food and proper clothes, not only because his circumstances were, in the conventional phrase, straitened, but because he had the obsession, visualised in mental pictures, that each mouthful he ate, each garment he permitted himself, was being stolen out of that future, black, hungry, pathless, deeper, into which his wife and children, she ailing and requiring comforts, they growing

and demanding more and more, yearly were being projected. And he was starved, and this was worse, of mental sustenance; cut off from intellectual companionship, from association with men of his own standing, from books, from stimulation of exchange of ideas, from social recreation, from participation in refinements. And he was starved, and this was worst of all, of hope.

This man who had come here, swinging his umbrella in enthusiasm of all that coming here meant to him, and of all that he was going to do here, had been run out upon as it were from an ambuscade, caught by the throat, bludgeoned, bound hand and foot, and carried away with his loved ones into a prison — and abandoned there; none knowing, seemingly, that he was there; none inquiring, seemingly, whither he had disappeared. The earth had opened and had swallowed him; the tide of life had stranded him and flowed past him, ignoring him. He was lost and there was no rescue party searching for him.

Those phrases vision his state of mind; but few have eyes for fellow-creatures' states of mind. In terms, then, merely of mild observation he was a man of university education made shepherd to sheep; and that is well enough, for sheep must be shepherded. But by those about him who also were shepherds, of activities, of interests, of pursuits, of amusements, he was given no more thought than that he was in his job, and had asked for it, and no doubt was happy in it; and that is not well.

Philippa was fourteen now, Jumbo twelve, Small David nearly six. Big David, as Roddy had begun to call David when Small David came, made one of the several unused rooms of the cavernous vicarage a schoolroom — in the winter the dining room was the schoolroom because the

extra fire could not be afforded — and gave the two girls lessons there. Their single holiday away from home was a month in the summer with Roddy's mother who, when they were with her, was exceptionally kind to them, sent them back rosy and happy and invariably with some new clothes in their boxes, and who prided herself on never forgetting their birthdays or Christmas; and who otherwise, and, apart from these communications, of their mother and their father, thought no more at all. Mrs. Pencliffe knew that Roddy and her husband were badly off, but she knew also, and often among her friends spoke sympathetically of it, that a great many people were badly off; and she was one of those who speak and write of poverty, its stimulations, its virtues, its simple joys, its happy compensations, with the broad-minded detachment, and penetrating insight of the very rich.

The two girls appeared for their own part to find in their lives all those simple joys of which their grandmother spoke with the warm enthusiasm of one who has never experienced them. Roddy, when she was well, was so much companion to their every mood, a world to them as it were of herself, that the absence of companions of their own age was little felt by them; when she was ill Big David somehow contrived a world of absorbing duties, to their mother, to himself, to Small David, about the house, in which they busied themselves with a consequential happiness that, as Mrs. Glumday complained, " Makes you feel, sir, as if you're afraid to put your hand to a job of work for fear one of the young ladies will beller yer off with ' Oh, Mrs. Glumday, I'm adoing of that ! ' I know," Mrs. Glumday, would continue, " that 'tis good and proper for young ladies to help and share when their pore ma's abed, as brought up my own the same though not claiming to be young ladies, though better than some could be named, but a body don't want to be bellered at, sir."

And, " Jumbo, Phil, do you hear that? Don't beller! " David would cry, in voice no whit less jolly than his voice of the memorable day when Mrs. Glumday with her cloggers first appeared; and the girls would rush off to explode their laughter by Roddy's bed and tell her that Father was up to his ways again, keeping them in fits all the time she was ill; and Roddy, laughing with them, when they were gone would have her heart twisted at the thought of the brave self Big David always had ready to make the children's way not seem to them the way in fact it was.

Or when, as sometimes would happen, Phil or Jumbo, moved by some story they had been reading or by some recollection of playmates met in the summer holiday with the grandmother, would say, " Father, I would like to go to school! " " To school, would you? " David would cry, springing up from whatever he was doing, " To school? Good, noble, earnest, studious daughter! At once, at once! Forgive your idle father for giving you an hour off! To school! To school! " and he would catch whichever of the pair had expressed the wish and rush her into the schoolroom, and plump her on a chair, and heap books in front of her, and try to get away from her and lock the door upon her before she could come rushing after him to return with him, breathless and laughing, all traces of the sudden wish for different circumstances evaporated and forgotten.

With Small David, Big David's holding of this other fort, this fort of home and all the loved ones in it, was differently conducted, and, at the termination of each bout, ended with different consequence upon himself. After the spells of fun with Jumbo and with Phil his face would just slip back, unobserved of them, to the face of one wolf-dogged that caused Roddy's heart so much to suffer; but with Small David, the son to whose upbringing he had looked forward with such devoted eagerness, often he

would break off in the midst of fun, emotions he could not control mastering him.

Small David was great for stories, and Big David a master hand at stories; but the stories that Small David liked best to hear were the stories that Big David had bitter pain to tell, for they were of the impossible, of the day when Small David, grown as big as twelve years old — "Twice as big as Small David is now," Big David would say, illustrating with his hand, Small David wonderingly watching — would have two boxes packed, a clothes box full of clothes, and a play box, full of tuck and games things, and go to a simply wonderful school. It had been one of his many dreams for the boy before the boy came. He had told it first when Small David, little more than two years old, had but dimly understood a point here and there; but it for some reason had captured the child's imagination and when the two were together — they were always together — he was forever saying, "Tell when Small David goes to school, Daddy."

". . . and two boxes, Small David will have," Big David would tell, always preserving in this, as in all stories of the kind, and they were many, Small David's infancy trick of using his own name instead of its pronouns. "In one box Small David will have suits of clothes with pockets ——"

"Three suits!" Small David would affirm.

"Yes, three suits; and huge big shirts like Dad's but not quite so huge and big; and huge big socks like Dad's but not quite so huge and big; and handkerchiefs, and collars ——"

"For his neck!"

"Yes, for his neck; and a dressing gown; *and,* what do you think, white trousers for cricket!"

"With poggets!" would cry Small David, who had

been thinking of the white trousers for cricket all the time.

"Yes, with pockets, one there and one here. And then in the other box cakes, a huge big cake and a little big cake, and sweets ——"

"In a tin!"

"Yes, in a tin; and chocolates ——"

"In a pagget!"

"Yes, in a packet; and books to read; and an engine that goes by itself, and a boat that goes by itself, and brown boots for football and white boots for cricket; and in his hand — what will Small David carry in his hand that Dad will give him for his own?"

"A crigget bat!" would shout Small David, who had difficulty with his "ck's" but none as to his coming possessions.

"Yes, a cricket bat, a beauty, hit a mile. And then, at this school Small David will play cricket, and football and fives and running and scouts and jumping, and — and what else?", Big David, for the pleasure of hearing him pronounce the word, always would pause here to inquire.

"And boxchin," earnestly would supply Small David, putting, as boxers will appreciate, the point into the Noble Art.

"Yes, boxing," the former Public School champion delightedly would agree. "What is it rules the Ring, Small David?"

"The straight left rules the Ring," Small David would solemnly affirm.

"Show Dad;" and Small David would tuck down his head and shoot out a tiny left fist, and Big David would give a shout of laughter and gather him into his arms; and then suddenly would squeeze him very tight and set him down.

The boy, he knew, was not to have any of these things. Other boys would have them, but his boy was not to have them. Other fathers, advanced or advancing in the world, would give these things to their sons, and all the things that followed them, the public school after the preparatory school, the university after the public school, but this boy would not be given them. This boy would live and learn at home, solitary and isolated from his kind as his father is from his kind.

After his return with Small David from the Bishop who knew not Joseph he never again would tell that story.

" Big David," Roddy said to him one day, " Small David is complaining bitterly that Dad never will tell him the when-Small-David-goes-to-school story. I try to but he says I don't tell it properly. Tell it him to-morrow, David."

David who had been sitting by her bed holding her hand, silent, deep in his thoughts, shook his head. " Never again! "

" David! "

Her plea was not for the story but against the reasons of his refusal to tell the story, and after a moment or two she made it again. " David! "

His head had been averted from her and he kept it averted. " What if I tell him," he said heavily, " and the girls, and in front of you, for, God's minister here on earth that you are, Roddy, you do not seem able to realise it, what if I tell Philippa and Jumbo and Small David the true story of what they may expect as they grow up, of what I have done for them by bringing them here? "

She tried with the hand she held to draw his attention towards her but he would not turn. " David, what when you tell Small David, when he is old enough to understand, what you have done for the Church by coming here? "

He gave a bitter laugh. " Done for the Church! "

" David, you have given yourself; and when you are

giving — remember Father Absolute — you are living. The fruits will come, David, do not fear it. There will be response one day, and when it comes, think, just imagine, David, what your joy will be, how worth while, much, much more than worth while all the giving will have been! You will have held the fort, David, and victory will have come. David, holding the fort, your own words, that is what you are doing for the Church, and the victory is coming, I feel it, I know it. David, think of those claims you staked the very first day you were here — Banjo Heritage and Miss Pasture. They are beginning — you know, you have told me yourself, how they are beginning to show up gold, both of them. Banjo and the drink — look at your triumph when you came in and told me of that, that morning before he went away. He has written to you recklessly that he is back at it again; well, that just shows that he *wants* you, that there is still work on the claim, *your* work, for you to do. Miss Pasture — much less hostile to you than she was, admitting you to her mother, *wanting* you to come to her mother; oh, she is melting, David, and you know it, and know how eagerly you have told me of it; *that* claim melting up the gold to you and waiting there for *your* work to melt it more. There, *both* those claims, the very first claims, beginning to show gold; and our prayers the first night we were here asked if there should be only *one*. David, it is better than we asked! Hold on at the fort, David. The victory is coming. Wait, David. Hold on, Big David; tell Small David how his old Dad is a giant holding a castle; and then count the days to when you can tell him how this old Dad won! Hold on, Big David — *tight!*"

He has turned now, full measure; slipped down from the bed and is in Felix Pasture's position on his knees beside it, his arms, as Felix's in his own troubled waters, about his raft that in them holds him up. "Roddy, Roddy, what

should I do without you! Get well; don't ever leave me, Roddy, don't!"

She gives a happy, tender laugh. "David, I have watched the battle; be certain I am going to watch the triumph!"

That is well while he is with her, and as though, as she tells him, the triumph is at hand, she gets better from that day and comes downstairs again; but he is not always in influence of her voice, his hand not always in her hand; and advancing winter chains the land again, suspending growth; and the long darkness, divided by drab days of piercing winds and frequent rain, in which the bareness of the vicarage, the bleakness of its lives, is searchingly exposed, chains up his soul anew, anew suspending courage, newly stifling hope.

He maintains his district visiting just as he has maintained always his early service — full measure, never a home of his villagers' homes missed, week by week, tramping the lanes, muddied, wet, ill protected from the cold, ill nourished for the exertion. He is, he thinks, clutching trifles to his heart, sufficiently welcome. The people will not come to his church; their betters do not and they are always glad to follow the example of their betters when that example points them the way they feel like going; but they appreciate, he thinks, the interest he tries to take in them and he keeps up the duty which, if it taxes him sometimes sorely, at least is his signal to himself that he is holding on. But there is nothing he can do materially to lift these lives towards the Church, to bring the Church into these lives; no Admiral who would have financed and carried forward village club, societies, socials, entertainments; no Piers Castle that might have done these things; no resident of means who will trouble himself or herself to give a thought, much less a lead and purse, to such. He is a shepherd and those are his sheep, and, beyond conventional

civilities here and there, from time to time, they worry, in the well-to-do farms and in the residential houses, no more about him than about the shepherds and cowmen and horsemen and labourers who do their own services; of his sheep they think much less than of their own. It is when, returning wet, chilled, fagged, utterly dispirited from a round of cheerless visits to the neglected isolation of his loved ones' lives, its bareness, its blackness, its lack of everything material that makes for home, he dwells on this, that there seizes him sometimes the mood of savagery against comfortable indifference, against callous uncharitableness of the spirit, that had made him savagely cry " God's fort! " at Medwyn Paradise swaddled snugly in his fur coat, cigar delicately smouldering, specification of his new car on his knee; and it happened that he was violent in this mood, raging the prisons of his desolation in it, when there came to him by messenger a note from Mr. Keepsake of Malford Regis, stating that he had most exasperatingly and suddenly completely lost his voice following a bad cold, and imploring him, for particular reasons, to come over and take evening service on the morrow, which was Sunday.

This was that Mr. Keepsake, that frightened looking little assistant of the Bishop of Westonbury and Canon Elder, whose mysterious gyrations, strange hoppings and intricate balancing rites formed so impressive a feature of the Heritage wedding; and David, wet and cold from his visits, shivering in the bitter wind at the hall door where he had taken the letter, overstrained by the accumulation of his distresses upon him, and caught in a moment when filled with one of his bursts of savagery in regard to them, had mental glimpse of that living of Malford Regis and its incumbent so different from his own and from himself, and had with it a sudden thought that caused in him a grim laugh, and said with the grim laugh to the messenger, " Yes, I will come. Tell Mr. Keepsake that, as he correctly says

here " — he glanced at the note — " my own evening service is not ' largely attended ', and that I will come. He says he will come over for me in his " — he glanced again — " his little car, ' not roomy but snug.' Thank him very much and say I will be ready for him at half-past five."

He laughed again as he closed the door. He had been in the dining room when the knock came, crouching over the fire before going to change his soaking clothes, but he went now into that one of the several barren, carpetless rooms of the vicarage called, as one was called the schoolroom, his study, and there animatedly paced the floor, rubbing his hands together, not because he was cold — he had forgotten how cold he was — but in gleeful exercise of the idea that had caused his grim laugh.

" I will come," he was saying to himself. " Oh, yes, I will come, Keepsake! I'll go; I'll take his service; I'll preach to 'em! I'll give 'em a sermon that will give chubby Keepsake his voice back, or make him wish he had it to stop me. I'll tell 'em a thing or two — my parishioners, many of 'em, and fat and rosy and good and pious, all of 'em, rolling up in their cars, and sitting in their cushioned pews and listening to their fat and rosy tame-cat parson. But not this time, Keepsake; not to-morrow; to-morrow they'll want all their cushions and they'll want all the butter you can give 'em for their sore places. To-morrow — I'll roast 'em, roast 'em, Keepsake, and you, *brown!* "

He looked again at Mr. Keepsake's letter and as he read it laughed again. The vicar of Malford Regis, it appeared, cut off by this calamitous complete loss of his voice, had arranged for a curate from Laversham to take the morning service, but, though he had tried everywhere, could by no possible means get any one for the evening, and the evening was of *particular* importance. His morning services, as, with the spacious detail of a fussy and

agitated man he explained, held at an hour when the leisured members of his congregation were, " of course ", inclined to take their leisure, lying abed late and looking over their horses and one thing and another ——

" Oh, of course, of course! " broke off David. " The hard lives they lead and the nose-to-grindstone week they have had, of course they must have their leisure, bless 'em, Keepsake; of course they must! I'll give 'em leisure! " and he continued the letter.

His morning service, explained Mr. Keepsake, was attended mostly by his village parishioners and it had come to be the established custom, " the thing ", for the residential members of his congregation to attend his evening service, which in many little ways — when Sir Pelham Heritage was away — he had adapted to their special dispositions, shortening, brightening, not quite the New Prayer Book, for that Sir Pelham would never allow, but something like it, just little things here and there that he could " indicate to you, my dear Quest ", in five minutes before the service ——

" Oh, but don't trouble, don't trouble; my dear Keepsake," David broke off, his mood growing upon him as he indulged it. " My good, chubby, not roomy but nice and snug car-ed Keepsake, don't you worry yourself to show me. I'll shorten 'em, I'll brighten 'em! "

And to-morrow night was of particular importance, concluded the letter, because three or four large house parties happened to be on for the week-end, the hostesses of which had promised to bring representatives in their train, and Mr. Keepsake was counting accordingly on goodly collection, the object being the recasting of certain of his beautiful chime of bells, a purpose he had much at heart ——

" And well may have, my dear Keepsake! ", also con-

cluded David, the more carried away the further he permitted himself to go. " I've only one tinpot bell myself, and I ring it myself, but your leisured residents, who include my leisured residents, deserve melodious chimes for their leisured ears, and they shall have them, my good Keepsake. I'll chime 'em! I'll give 'em melodious chimes! "

He was in a mood in which Roddy would not have known him and would have been alarmed for him if she had seen him in it. He had endured what he had endured six years and was like to endure it for sixty; and this sudden presentation before his eyes of the comfortably circumstanced, to whom the circumstances of such as himself were as matters of another world, ministered to by a man who, comfortably conditioned, had always ignored him because others of the comfortable ignored him, had caused a snapping of his controls, a desire to hit out with his hands, as it were a seeing red. He was in the mood in which passionate outbreaks are released, passionate violences committed.

He concealed it from Roddy, telling her only of the request and of his acceptance of it: affixed a notice to his church door that the customary evening service would not be held and sent Philippa and Jumbo with personal messages to that effect to the few cottages which gave him desultory attendance of a Sunday evening; and at the time appointed was waiting ready — more than ready — for the not roomy but quite snug little car. Mr. Keepsake, who presented himself so wound about with mufflers as to make his neck appear of the same girth as his shoulders, whispered out of the anxious little face which, terminating at the mouth, stuck out of these swathings with the suggestion of a rabbit peeping from a burrow, that he would not come in, as it was imperative he should change atmospheres as infrequently as possible; and David

therefore, kissing Roddy at the door, and attended by Philippa and Jumbo excitedly hopping about him, doubled himself up, backed into the little box on wheels beside the anxious little man, drew in his long legs after him, and sitting with his chin on his knees declared "Right!"

A bead of electric light in the lid of the box caused a dim glow in the interior. "Oh, my dear fellow," produced Mr. Keepsake in ghostly whisper, "won't you wear a thicker coat?"

"Haven't got a thicker coat," said David.

His tone was blunt, uncompromising; but the ghostly whisper which, to suggest its eerie faintness and its occasional complete failure, had better perhaps be rendered in different type and with lacunæ, returned only, *"Oh, my dear fellow . . . should have . . . bitter";* and Mr. Keepsake set himself to firm and prolonged pressure of a knob in front of him, causing enormous whizzing sounds, leaps, convulsions and vibrations of the little box but no sort of progression.

"In gear," announced the ghostly whisper, *"always forget it;"* and after strenuous movements of the hands and feet of Mr. Keepsake among levers and pedals the little box leapt forward with a sudden bound, causing David to receive a sharp blow upon the chin from his knees and Mr. Keepsake to go a shade paler than his indisposition already caused him to be, shot up the drive rather as if it were a runaway Shetland pony, shied violently at the gatepost, responded with a convulsive jerk to convulsive thrust of Mr. Keepsake's foot upon the brake, stopped dead, and receiving the spur of the knob again, proceeded cautiously into the roadway.

"You drive a car?" questioned the whisper, as stating thereby all that needed to be stated by way of comment on these impassioned backings and fillings.

"No," said David.

"*Oh, my dear fellow . . . should . . . country . . . necessary.*"

David made no reply to this for a moment. This little man, living only six miles from him, knowing so little of him as to ask him if he kept a car! "A wheelbarrow," he then said, "is what I badly want in my garden — and can't afford."

Mr. Keepsake produced so much ghostly laughter at this that the little box, taking advantage, shied again; and Mr. Keepsake, made serious by controlling the shy, betook his ghostly whisper to more serious matters. So good, said the whisper, of his dear fellow to come; and, oh, his dear fellow would not mind him mentioning it, but he would, of course, suit his sermon to his congregation; not too long, not too — too — well, Sir Pelham, doubtless misunderstanding, had credited him with — with ideas — well — "*Well, . . . know what I mean, old fellow . . . friendly atmosphere . . . personal relations . . . family community . . .*"

"You may depend absolutely," said David, "that I will suit my sermon to my congregation. I always do. That is precisely what one always should do, isn't it?"

Something in his tone caused Mr. Keepsake to shoot a swift glance at him, but something in the road causing the little box simultaneously to shoot a swift glance towards the hedge, his attention was required in the latter quarter before it could tell him anything in the former and he contented himself therefore with "*Absolutely . . . dear fellow, absolutely*", which was, indeed, all that there was to be said to such a proposition.

And that, after all — suiting his sermon to his congregation — was all that David did when, in due course,

he entered Mr. Keepsake's pulpit and looked down upon the comfortable little gathering — the Paradises, the Eiders, the Distaffs, the Trappers — before him. His text was from Galatians, " But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh "; and it was a text on which he had preached before; and his sermon was in general no more than, on that glad umbrella-swinging day in the park, he had told Mr. Custom was his gospel that he longed for opportunity to preach. But he knew in every moment of his delivery, from the moment when he first stood there looking down, to the moment when, trembling, the hand that supported him along the rail shaking, he descended the steps at the termination of his address, that he was possessed as he spoke with two mentalities, a mentality that directed and spoke, filling his utterance with a bitter gall, and a mentality that crouched by and grieved at him, filling his heart with a bitter anguish.

He stood there and looked down, and he knew that he stood in an attitude menacing and with a look of menace. He repeated the first five words of his text, very deliberately, with a long pause before them and a long pause after them, " But I say Walk by the Spirit "; and he knew that he spoke it, not as out of Holy Writ but out of the mouth of a man, back to wall, goaded by suffering to reprisal, facing those in whom he saw pursuers, tormenters, mockers, and about to lash them with his wrongs. His one mentality said to him, " These are your enemies, hate them," and he obeyed it; his other mentality said, " These are your fellow kind, love them," and he put it beneath his feet and kept his feet upon it. His one mentality said, " Bring it home to them; make them see themselves for what they are;" his other mentality said, " Man, bring this that you are saying home to yourself. Your

lips are scourging meanness, selfishness, spite, envy, intolerance, callousness, want of sympathy; man, man, David, David, your own spirit is envenomed and murderous with these!"

He saw the uneasy stirrings, the astonished looks, the discomposed gestures with which he was received; and he knew that these were not so much at his words but at the bitterness with which he spoke his words. "Let us try for once, for a day, for an hour by the clock, to look at things as our neighbors see them, and for once try to understand why it is that they see them." He had said that, pleading it, a score of times and there had been no uneasy movements such as here. But "Try for once! For a day if you are capable of it! For an hour by the clock if you can! To look at things as the other man sees them! As they appear, and as they are, in his sad eyes! Not as your cold, hard indifferent eyes see them! Try that, if you can!" He now said that, declaiming it, and he saw what he saw as he said it.

He finished and came down, his body trembling, his hand that supported him along the rail down the steps shaking. He looked at Mr. Keepsake. Mr. Keepsake's eyes were starting in his head and watering. He appeared either to be swallowing a stone, causing him pain, or to have seen a ghost, causing him fear.

David went to his seat and, though a hymn was being sung, to his knees, then immediately stood upright again. That force within him which had impelled him to what he had done and carried him through it, seemed, as he had come down the pulpit steps, suddenly to have deserted him. Abandoned by it, exposed now solely to the supplication of that other mentality which, till now, had entreated him in vain, what right had he, he asked himself, to kneel in prayer in this church whose pulpit he had turned

to his own uses? He had a sudden longing, a most desperate yearning, to get away into the loneliness of his own church, which knew his sufferings, which had heard his prayers.

He followed Mr. Keepsake into the vestry and there at once, not to hear what his ghostly whispers might pronounce, turned his back on him; hurrying out of his surplice; hastening it into his case; huddling into the threadbare coat that Mr. Keepsake had thought insufficient for the bitter night. "No, no," he cried, answering a gesture made as he took his hat, "No, no, I will walk." His voice was unsteady, his hands trembling, his eyes averted from the piteous little man whom he had given such hurt. "I prefer to walk;" and he went quickly as he could go.

It was raining hard, the night pitchy black and squally, and he had six miles to cover. He walked at furious pace, splashing through pools of water, stumbling frequently. Once, catching his foot, he fell forward violently onto his hands and knees. He was racing his thoughts. He was trying to shut all thoughts out of his mind, to render it a blank. His desire, so urgent within him that sometimes he ran, was to get to his church, his own church that knew him, his own church that understood him and would receive and shelter him.

He was more exhausted than he knew when he came to it. His hands were so numbed that, try as he would, he could not for several moments turn the great ring that was the handle. It turned at last and, leaning against the door in his exhaustion, he more fell in than walked. Two lamps were burning. It had been ever since he came his custom to keep light in the church until he went to bed and he had lit these before he started. He liked the windows to show a gleam — his fort, always those were his words to himself when he entered, that he was holding.

His fort! That he was holding!

He stumbled up the aisle and to the altar rails. His fort that he was holding! He collapsed there, his head buried in his arms. He cried aloud "Defeat! Defeat! Oh, God, I am defeated!"

He did not know how long he remained there and thus. He suddenly was aware that, though his face, as he had believed, was buried in his arms, he was looking at the altar. No, it was not the altar. The altar was merging away. Something else was merging there — a vast interior, pillared, vaulted, filled with a great assembly, seated, listening. He also was seated, also listening. He was holding his mother's hand. A voice was speaking, ringing down to him so that he quivered with an ecstasy to hear it. "I would to God. . . . I would promise every fellow there more fighting; more gallant hardship; more need for desperate courage; more call for sacrifice to save another; more glorious, infinitely more glorious victories; more noble, infinitely more noble death, going down fighting to help fill up the moat that those behind may tread upon the bodies as they bring the Cross shining on, with sword of light in his hand, than ever he would win with sword of steel. Let him come to me! I will tell him!"

He saw himself start up in his seat beside his mother and cry out "Father! Father Absolute!"

Yes, it was Father Absolute up there. He struggled to go forward to him, but was leaden, could not move. "Father Absolute! Father Absolute!"

He saw that splendid face turn shining towards him. "What David! David! Charge once more, man, and be dumb ——"

No, Father Absolute was not there. Nothing of all that was there. He was here in his own church, bowed at his own altar. But that voice! He was certain of it!

He felt a touch upon his shoulder and he turned swiftly, amazed. " Father! Father Absolute! "

It was not Father Absolute. It was Miss Pasture.

She said, " Vicar, Mr. Quest, I want you. I need you."

CHAPTER XI

TURNING POINT

It was with emotions charged beyond natural point that David turned to Miss Pasture. In vivid dreams there is a degree of intensity of feeling never experienced in consciousness, howsoever intense the occasion. The mind is out of control; and all senses that are called upon, whether of fear or of courage, of love or hate, of laughter or of tears, respond with an immoderation not possible when beneath the governance of intelligence. The mind awakes, realisation springs to the controls, and the sense that had been immoderately distracted withdraws to its cell and is calm. But it is not instantaneously calm. For a brief space, overexerted, it crouches trembling, breathless; and it imparts in that brief space its flutterings to the awakened sleeper. If in his dream he has been terrified, he lies for briefest moments alarmed; if he has wept he lies a moment desolated.

David, by his vision of Father Absolute, passed into it from uncontrollable dejection of defeat, was raised by it to transports uncontrollable in call to action, promise of triumph; and he sprung directly from them, their influence still pulsing within him, to action needed—to one, and such a one, come to him for help! Taken in cold blood, he would have had, as with Miss Pasture he was always made to have, diffidence in approaching her. Caught as he was, he was instantly upon his feet; instinctively, as if he still was in his dream, both his hands were outstretched to her. "Miss Pasture! What is it that I can do for you?"

"My mother," she said heavily, "is dead."

Involuntarily his arms, falling to his sides, made the gesture suitable to man's mortality. "Ah, my heart grieves for you," he murmured.

Her head had been bowed. She raised her face to his and he saw how scarred of grief it was, how changed from their hard boldness her dimmed eyes. "Grieves for me?" she said dully. "You tell me that?"

He put out his hands again. "Oh, need I assure you of it? Your mother to whom you gave such love, such life devotion! Oh, believe me, Miss Pasture, my sympathy is profound, profound."

She drew a strangled breath. Very slowly raising her hands, she suffered them as it were to fall into his. He could feel their weight. She was bowed from the shoulders upwards. He thought it a lamentable and a terrible thing to see such dominance thus fallen.

"My heart," she said, "is broken. My mother ——" she made that strangled clutch at breath again.

He said, "God receive her soul; He has received it. God comfort and support you; He will support you."

He could feel and see her shivering. He thought it lamentable and terrible to see such inflexibility as had been hers thus riven and collapsed.

She withdrew her hands and stood up and put her handkerchief to her eyes. "It is not my mother's death that has broken my heart," she said, "it is what happened just before she died."

He said gently, feeling himself invited thereto, "Do you want to tell me?"

"I have come here to tell you."

He indicated chairs that stood before the front pew. "You would like to sit down?"

When he was seated beside her, "Can I tell you here?" she asked.

"What better place? Your mother used to worship here, before I came."

"And I," she said, "before you came."

He had a vivid thought of the bitter hate with which those words would have been ejected from her lips when last he knew her. They fell now from her, her eyes upon the ground, lifelessly, as dead fruit from a tree; and he felt that he had no reply to make to them. "Was your mother's death," he asked, "very sudden? I think it must have been. When I last saw her——"

Her eyes still upon the ground, "It was just after you left, last Monday," Miss Pasture said, "that what ended her life, her beloved life, began. She had a heart attack. It came quite suddenly, while I was reading to her. It was terrible. She struggled for breath. I thought she was going to die. Oh, terrible! Annie rushed up to Great House and telephoned to Doctor Creek. He was out but he came later on and my mother was over the attack then; but had another while he was there and he warned me that the attacks might cease and spare her, but might continue and carry her off, either during one or in her sleep, and he thought that they would. They did continue. She was quite all right between them but every time one came I thought the end had come. She knew it was coming. In between the attacks, and sometimes she would go hours and hours without one, on Wednesday she had none at all, she was more sweet and gentle and happy than I think I have ever known her, but she knew. But she kept asking for Felix."

Miss Pasture with that, as though her voice in the onset of some emotion was lost to her, was silent many moments. David also was silent. It was the first time he had ever heard her pronounce her brother's name. Always before, spurned from her mouth, "My brother"; now, in those dead tones, "Felix."

"I did not want Felix," the dead tones went on. "I wanted my mother to myself."

Again silence.

"And I wanted him where he was. He was waiting for something I wanted to happen."

Longer silence.

"On Thursday my mother had a terrible attack. I thought she would never come through it and I kept calling to her that Felix was coming, and I tore at the bell rope and sent Annie with a telegram to him to come and in the evening he came."

David's murmur, "Ah, thank God!" and at that first interruption by him of her recital, she for the first time since she had begun it turned up her face to him. "But I hated him coming," she said. "My mother who had been with me, mine only, just she and I, for more than twenty years, was going away from me, and I hated and loathed to have my brother there between us."

Hatred was not in her voice, the deadness only; but the words were the words of the terrible hate, showing it to have been present almost to the end, and David recalled what she had said when she began.

"But before your mother died——" he said.

"Yes, that; that changed everything. But when you said 'Thank God' just now, I could not let you credit me with any forgiving intention before what happened made me——"

Her utterance faltered. He saw her lips trembling and it was, he thought, at stress of being called to issue from between them the words "Made me forgive." But "forgive" was not the word at which she had faltered. "——made me what I am," she said, and she put her hands crossed upon her breast and bowed her head above them. "Do you see what I am?" she asked. "I am broken."

He touched her arm. "I see," he said, "how grieved you are."

She said, "No, broken utterly. Mr. Quest, if my mother had died without what happened before she died, I never would have come to you as I have come, I never would have been reconciled to Felix as — yes, I tell it to you; yes, I am glad that you who I have wronged so deeply should be the first to know — as I am reconciled to him."

"Ah, God be praised!" went from David. It was uttered beneath his breath, but it was a cry, a whispered cry of joy. That terrible hatred of her brother in which himself so terribly was implicated had hung about all his life here as a miasma above a swamp. He never in passing Stone House, much less in entering, could raise his eyes to the place of its presence without feeling its poisoned breath, without, wolf-dogged as he was, involuntary shudder, without prayer for its passing. It now, he was told, was passed and he felt as a man might feel whose prayer of heaven is answered before his eyes as he prays. He felt, and realised that he felt, as if all the grinding years in this place, as if the wolf that dogged him through this place, were lifted from him as an insupportable burden is lifted; vanished, gone, never having been. "Ah, God be praised!" he cried again.

She was too occupied with her own stress of desolation to give heed to his of joy. "I am utterly broken," she said, "and why I am is because for twenty years I have lived on hate, solely on hate, and hate has been drawn out of me. Hate supported me in every hour of every day, Mr. Quest, and it has been drawn out of me, and I feel as if all my strength has gone."

He was caused by a visualisation of her words — a picture of a vital and a terrible force being drawn from her and leaving her quivering — to have a tingling sensation as

though he stood upon the edge of supernatural mysteries.
"What drew it out, Miss Pasture?"

"My brother told my mother before she died what he had done."

"Ah, told her!"

"He recalled everything to her."

"Ah, piteous for him, piteous!"

"He told me he could not bear to let her die without confessing to her."

"Oh, terrible! And she realised, remembered?"

Miss Pasture clasped her hands together and held them towards David as though she implored compassion of him. "Mr. Quest, this was what happened, this was what drew my hate out of me—this knowledge that a thing of heaven could happen here on earth. When he told my mother——"

Here, on the previous night, at that same hour in which David now was told of it, is that old Mrs. Pasture about to be told. She is lying on her back in her bed, one hand held by Miss Pasture who kneels on one side, the other held by Felix, kneeling on the other side. Miss Pasture is watching her mother's face, gently smiling now, soon to be still in death; Felix has his mother's hand beneath his forehead, his head bowed down upon it. He has just told her that there is something he has to tell her. He is about to tell it now.

Miss Pasture has tried to dissuade him. He had arrived from London with the intention to tell his mother urgent upon him. From the moment he had opened the telegram no thought of his mother had been in his mind but with, exacerbating its poignancy, the resolve that he must confess and be forgiven before she went away from him for ever. The thought of life with his crime against her expunged only by her loss of memory which before, while

she lived, alone held him to life, now, if she died and went from him, was insupportable to him. It appeared to him as, tortured with grief and with suspense, he came down in the train, that, added to his sin, he had played a trick upon his mother. She would pass out, his tortured imagination told him, to the knowledge beyond the grave and she would know then the advantage he had taken of her infirmity. She would be dead and he would live with the knowledge of the advantage he had taken of her. She would pass out, and know, and long to forgive him and be unable to forgive him. He would live and would know himself unforgiven. It was insupportable to him. His first words to his sister on his arrival were, "Lucy, how is she?" His immediate words when he had been told were, "Lucy, if she is going to die I must tell her."

Miss Pasture had opened the front door to him, and while they exchanged question and answer had stood looking down upon him — abject as ever before her, more abject now in his distress — making no motion to let him enter. She hated him. She hated him the more that, of her love for her mother and because of her mother's love for her, she had been compelled to bring him back.

"Tell her!" she cried.

"Lucy, before she dies I must tell her what I did."

He was fumbling his hands together, a pitiable object; but she was without pity, and knowing him she did not for a moment believe that he would dare to tell. She gave a contemptuously incredulous sound. "You may please yourself," she said and drew aside to let him pass. "She is asleep now. Go in without a sound, and go your own side of the bed, not mine. I am coming at once."

As a dog terrified of a foot he slunk between her and the wall, and as one whose vengeance still parches her she stood glowering upon his back as he ascended the stairs. When he was halfway up her venom against him, quick-

ened by the thought of him going to her mother, broke from her anew. "You have not thanked me for letting you come back."

He turned. "I do thank you, Lucy."

"You are not going to stay long, do not think it."

"Lucy! But I may stay till——"

"It depends. I want you where you have been until those two have been at his rooms together. Did anything happen to-day?"

He appealed: "Oh, Lucy, not now that business, please not now!"

"Do you want me to turn you out again to-night?"

He fumbled his hands together. "Oh, please let me go to Mother."

Something in his agitation attracted her. She came strongly to the foot of the stairs. "Did they meet to-day?"

"Yes, Lucy."

She struck her hand on the banisters. "Well, tell me, will you, tell me!"

"Lucy, am I to go back only until they have been to his rooms?"

"Tell me, will you!"

"They went there to-day."

She gave a strong exclamation. "Ah! At last. How long?"

"They had been there all the afternoon. Then your telegram came and I did not see them leave."

She clicked a vexed tongue. "T'chk!" Then "Never mind," she said grimly. "It is enough. When I send you out from Mother write down the time you saw them go in and the time when you left them there, just as you have written your other reports. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Lucy."

"Go, then."

He went up and she had a last fling at him as he went.

"I suppose you think that when you have told Mother you will be able to defy me? Remind her, won't you, how also you have been deceiving her all this time, the lies you have been telling her and acting to her. Go on. Tell her, when she wakes — if you dare."

He did not dare. When, awaking, those eyes so beloved to him unclosed; when he saw flood into their bedrowsed, half-sleeping look the exquisite happiness, the whelming tide of devotion that his face brought to her; when her body, so frail now, was drawn against his breast; when her arms, so feeble now, were about his neck; when her beloved voice, "Oh, Happy! Happy! Oh, my dear, dear boy!" was in his ears, he could not tell her. Those eyes were soon to close for ever, those hands to lose their touch for ever, that voice for ever to be still; he could not suffer one moment out of the flying moments that remained to hold their love of him in suspense while he told. He put it off. That was Thursday night. All Friday he put it off, all Friday night, all Saturday morning. It was the normal singularity of her condition that between the onsets of her attacks of the heart she appeared quite reasonably well, fully possessed of all her faculties, easily tired but able, when rested, to talk sweetly, cheerfully, intelligently on any subject. She knew, she said, that she was going to die and so long as she had her dear Happy and her dear Lucydear with her was not a little bit afraid to die, only so sorry "so very, very sorry to leave you two dear, dear children"; but it was very difficult, seeing her thus, to realise that she was going to die, and though he could not bear to have her die and his confession unmade, equally he could not bear that, living, perhaps a long time yet, she should know him for what in fact he was.

He put it off.

Then in the mid-afternoon of Saturday came one of her attacks, Doctor Creek paying his usual visit happening to be present, and it was not to be put off any more. It was the

worst attack that Miss Pasture had seen, the first that Felix had seen, and the terrible struggle of his mother for breath, rending his heart while he watched it, presented to him life so far ravaged into the ferocious jaws of death that it did not appear possible to him that it could withdraw itself. Withdrawing itself as presently it did, lying there utterly exhausted as presently it lay, it was beyond possibility, he felt, that another such attack could be survived. He asked Doctor Creek, and Tom Creek, standing outside the bedroom door with brother and sister, thought not also. "I think it improbable," he said in his deeply sympathetic way. "I do not think she can last very much longer. I hope for your sakes and for hers, dear old lady, that she will just slip away in her sleep."

Slip away in her sleep! Slip away from him and leave him for ever with his sin untold, forgiveness ungiven! It must not be! Tom Creek had moved away, gone, and left the two together about to return into the sick room; soon, as their fears had been confirmed to them, to be death room.

Felix Pasture said, "Lucy, I must tell her."

At the supreme crisis of their mother's paroxysm, when it had seemed that unquestionably she must go, eyes of brother and sister had met across her agonies and looked, for the first time, not hate into appeal, but agony into agony. It was with the touch of that mutual bond still upon them that Miss Pasture received her brother's words. She said nothing; but she put her handkerchief to her eyes and, standing nearer to the door, opened it and let him pass in before her.

Mrs. Pasture had seemed to be just dropping off to sleep when they had come out with the doctor. She was sleeping peacefully now and they watched beside her while she slept till nearly seven o'clock. Awaking, she showed herself, as always, amazingly recovered, talked quietly and wished to be talked with and

took a little food. At nine, yes, she thought she could sleep again, she certainly did feel very tired, she thought she would just close her eyes and perhaps drop off.

Ah, just slip away in her sleep!

Felix Pasture put down his forehead on his mother's hand, held between his own. "Mother!"

"Yes, dear Happy?"

"Mother, I have something to say to you."

"Tell me, Happy dear."

"Something I must tell."

"Tell me, dear Happy."

"Mother — years ago — you have forgotten ——"

He heard his sister catch her breath. He pressed his forehead closer against his mother's hand. "Years ago, when we first came to this house, Mother, I did you a terrible wrong. You had all Father's money then. I borrowed — I stole it all from you, Mother."

He felt his mother's hand withdrawing from his fingers.

Withdrawing!

"Mother, forgive me."

Withdrawn!

"Mother, Mother, say that you forgive me!"

Her sweet voice. "Dear Happy, there is nothing to forgive."

"Mother, you have forgotten; you had an illness; your memory went ——"

The fingers of the hand she had withdrawn seemed to be feeling in his hair, moved up his hair, ever so gently were laid upon his head.

"Dear Happy, I never forgot. I always remembered. I have always known it, dear, dear Happy and dear Lucy-dear."

He heard his sister cry: "Oh, Mother! You have always known! You have known!"

Himself: "Oh, my God," he groaned. "You have known! You have known!"

He felt the fingers gently moving in his hair. "Yes, dears, always known."

He heard his sister sobbing.

"You see, dears," he heard his mother's voice, "it was like this——"

Her voice so gentle, so sweetly toned! He was carried back, vividly as though actually before him, to his childhood, himself and Lucy sitting on footstools by their mother, watching her face, hearing a story told in just those tones. "You see, dears, it was like this. When dear Happy had been gone a long time and I saw how vexed dear Lucydear was with him, it hurt me to hear her speak of him like that because of what you had done, Happy dear, so I thought, dears, I would pretend to forget what he had done, so as not to hear Lucydear say unkind things——"

His sister's sobbing voice: "Oh, Mother!"

"So you see, dears, I was able to speak of my dear Happy then, thinking of him all the time as I was, and knowing perfectly well he would come back to me——"

His own voice: "Mother! Mother!"

"And Lucydear was so very, very kind and loving then, and when I spoke of my dear Happy then, never, never said an unkind word; not once, Happy! Oh, so kind, oh, so loving, oh, so patient! No mother has ever had such a daughter as Lucydear has been to me; and so you see, dears, when dear Happy came back, I thought it best to go on just the same because, Lucydear, I thought you might be vexed if you knew that I remembered all about it and had forgiven Happy long, long ago."

His sister's voice: "Oh, Mother!"

"So you see, dears, that was how it was, and now I am ever so glad, dears, that it has ended like this because—Dear Happy, are you crying, Happy? Why should you cry, Happy dear?"

His voice: "Forgive! Forgive!"

She fondles his hair: "Oh, Happy, forgive! It was all so long, long, long ago, there is nothing to forgive. There never was, dear Happy. You were foolish, you made a mistake; that was all. Nothing to forgive, dear Happy, nothing to forgive."

His own voice: "Mother! Mother!"

"And Lucydear says nothing to forgive too, don't you, Lucydear?"

His sister's voice: "Oh, Mother, my heart is broken, broken, Mother."

"Oh, why, Lucydear, why? Everything is mended now; nothing is broken now. Let your dear hand come with mine, Lucydear; and your hand, dear Happy, come with mine. There, both coming together; there, touching, holding! There, and Mother's hand on them, holding them together —there, there, there!"

"She fell asleep," Miss Pasture concludes to David, "holding her hands on our hands. I think we both slept too. Then we found her hands on our hands were cold. . . ."

She wiped her eyes. "Hate has been drawn out of me, Mr. Quest."

Not wishing to cause her the embarrassment of his regard while she had been telling him, David had been sitting with head averted. "I can believe there could no more be hate," he said gently, eyes still averted; but at her next words turned to her in quick astonishment.

"That is what I am here to tell you," she said. "I have lived on hate, and it is gone out of me like an arm cut off —hatred of my brother, hatred of you, hatred of Lady Heritage."

It was at that that David, astonished, turned.

"Of Lady Heritage?"

She got up. She was wearing a macintosh and she drew

from its pocket a bundle of letters tied with an elastic band. "Banjo Heritage and Lady Heritage are committing themselves together. I have had them watched in London because I hated her. I cannot hate now. Please save her, Mr. Quest."

She held out the packet to him, but he was staring upon her dumbfounded.

"Take these," she said.

He said spellboundedly: "Banjo? Lady Heritage?"

"Banjo Heritage is your friend. You have influence with him. Please save her, Mr. Quest."

"You are certain?" he uttered.

"These letters are the watchings of their movements. Please save her, Mr. Quest."

He was staring upon the packet, turning it over and over in his hand.

"I am going," she said.

He still was engrossed, under spell.

"I must go," she said.

He looked up and saw her hand, aroused himself from his amazement, and warmly took it. "I say to you," he said, "God bless you."

She went towards the door. "You will bury my mother?"

"It will be the greatest privilege I have had since I have been here."

She stopped and looked at him. "Ah, you have had few. I know it — too well."

He coloured.

"I think things will turn for you," she said.

He said deeply, "Things are turning, I think, to God."

When she was gone he went, the letters in his hand, again to kneel before the altar from which she had aroused him.

CHAPTER XII

POINT–BLANK

On the following day Banjo, as he had arranged, returned to his cottage. It was Monday. On Tuesday Dawn and Pelham were to come to Piers; on Thursday he was to see Dawn. Two days more! Every time on his way down to Parva that the thought "Two days more!" came into his mind his lips twitched together in sharp compression. Throughout most of the day following Dawn's visit to his rooms he had thought of her in the mood in which, and beneath the influences with which, he had conducted their meeting. He had not thought at all of the coming Thursday; there had been no sharp compressions of his lips; Paddock who for weeks past had been finding him, to borrow one of Mr. Drizzle's expressions, like one of them there All Satan dogs, found him, if not the whimsical, at least the easy-going and friendly self of former times.

But by the evening of that Friday that mood and those influences were dropping from him fast. Into their place pressed the realisation of what it was that he was offering to lose, the thought of Dawn as he had seen her when he had said, "If I put down my lips on your most lovely lips, I could draw love, honour, all, all of you, body and soul", the thought of her as she had looked when she had said, "Just kiss me, Banjo", and, not touching her save with his lips, he had kissed hers. Was he going to lose that? The question, posed to himself as question that Friday evening, on Friday night, as he lay sleepless, and then dozed and dreamt and woke, changed from question to defiant cry. Am I going to lose that! Intolerable! He writhed upon his

bed with it. He slept and dreamt that he had lost her, that all was over, settled, done; and he sprang out of his sleep as out of a nightmare, and found the sweat streaming upon his body, and had a delirium of joy that the thing was dream only, and cried out loud, "Lose her! No, no, by all the powers I will not lose her! Enough of that! I am done with that for ever, for ever!" and got up and went to the next room for drink, and threw off his wringing night clothes and dressed and tried no more to sleep. "Am I going to lose her! No! No, by everything that is in me I will not!"

In the morning, then, Saturday, "Four days more!", and to Paddock, when his meals, scarcely touched, were on the table, "Take that stuff away!" On Sunday, "Three days more!", and to Paddock, "Clear that dashed stuff off!" Now Monday, "Two days more!", and his mouth, every time, setting fixedly upon it; and he is arrived, with Paddock, at Kington Berger station; and in the village stops the cab sent for him to replenish the cellarette in the bureau; and at the cottage, the hour one o'clock, says, "No lunch!" and presently goes to the garage to tinker with the car, overlong unused.

When he came back into the sitting room the table was set for a meal and he gave an impatient exclamation, "Paddock!"

"Sir!" cried Paddock, springing into the room in bowler hat and shirt sleeves as though shot there by that excitement of return with which ever since daybreak he had been bursting.

"Didn't I tell you no lunch?"

"Sir," said Paddock, springing from the floor at one point and coming down smartly at attention in another, "sir, it's just egg and bacon, sir, and in an officers' mess in the army, sir, would be a snack and not lunch at all, sir. Sir——"

"Clear the table," said Banjo.

"Sir," said Paddock, quivering with the emotion of one bringing change of air enthusiasm to the mollifying of an All Satan dog, "sir, my wife thinks you have got very thin in the great metropolis, sir, and she thinks——"

"Clear the table. You can leave the glass. Who is that at the gate?"

Paddock, who stood sideways against the window, turned his head and neck smartly towards it, and as smartly back again. "That's the vicar, sir."

"Bring him in. You can leave the table."

David had not known that Banjo actually was in the room. Banjo just caught the something unusual expression on his face — something between anxiety and purpose — as he appeared on the threshold; but it was gone in a flash when he saw Banjo.

"Hulloa, Banjo! Grand to see you!"

"Quest, old man! A-1 to see you. Fine of you to call so quick. You got my postcard?"

"Rather! Not too soon on your arrival, am I?"

"Couldn't be. Had lunch?"

"Long ago. You?"

"What I want. Just going to top up with a spot."

Banjo thought he saw David's eyelids flicker and he gave a laugh. "But the glass is yet untouched; look," and he picked up the tumbler and held it upside down.

David disregarded whatever reference to the broken resolution to stop the drink was to be implied. He was looking at Banjo now with a searching regard. "Banjo, you may have had what you want for lunch to-day but I would say you have not been getting it lately. You have got mighty thin, Banjo."

"Ah, I have been working, my boy. Honest to goodness hard work."

David maintained his close regard. "Overworking, I would say. You are more than thin, Banjo. You have a tucked-up look. I don't think I like the look of you."

His voice had not the heartiness of his greeting sentences. It had a sober quality. Banjo looked up and saw that the regard bent upon him also was sober. He coloured very slightly, then he laughed. "Here, who is the doctor on these premises? That is my job, especially after my course. You are not precisely bursting with obesity yourself, you know." In his turn he looked more closely at the other. "But I believe you are looking somehow better, old man." He narrowed his eyes at David. "Tucked-up, you called me. Do you know, braced-up, I think I would call you, Quest. You look — keener, old man."

"I am," David said.

"Good on you! Are things going better with you, Quest?"

"Banjo, they are; mighty better. I believe things have taken a turn for me, Banjo."

Banjo came across and took him by the shoulder. "The best news I have heard in years! The very best! Tell us, old man."

"Why, I thought, as you know, I was not wanted here. I find I am."

He had seated himself on the settee; Banjo, when he came across, on its arm; and Banjo now put down a delighted hand and shook David's. "Quest, I *am* glad. I know just how you have been, just what this means to you. Tell more, old man."

"Thank you, Banjo. You know Miss Pasture's bitter down on me?"

"Too well."

"It is vanished. We are friends. She came to me for help."

Banjo was all attention. "You don't say!"

"She did. Her mother died yesterday."

"Ah, poor old soul!"

"Banjo, you know she was supposed to have forgotten all about what the son did?"

"Supposed to have? She had."

"She had not."

Responding to Banjo's exclamation, David set out to him the circumstances of Mrs. Pasture's revelation of her secret, its effect upon Miss Pasture. "And all her hate," he concluded, "her own words, Banjo, drawn right out of her."

Banjo had got up while David was speaking and done a pace or two. He halted now and nodded slowly. "Ah, by God, yes," he said intensely; "I reckon that would pretty well draw the devil out of anybody."

"But I prefer it," David said, "the other way about."

Banjo's eyebrows questioned him.

"My old theme," he answered, "bringing the spirit up on deck — driving the devil off it."

For a very brief but noticeable space there was silence. Then Banjo, rather in the tone of one who has not caught a thing correctly but affects that he has, said, "Eh? Oh, yes, rather", and resumed his pacing.

"Remember," David asked, "when we last talked about that?"

Banjo took up the dry glass he had pointed out, still dry, and carried it to the bureau. "Forgotten my after-lunch spot," he said. "Yes, I believe I do."

"In the church the morning you were going off."

Banjo had a bottle in his hand and was about to pour. He stood sideways to David. The hand that held the bottle was shaking, David saw. It clinked against the glass. "Dash this thing," Banjo said quietly.

David said, "Banjo, what is this about you and Lady Heritage?"

He saw the hand that had been shaking become abso-

lutely steady. In a voice quietly toned, absolutely composed, Banjo, pouring, carefully watching what he was doing, said, "Where did you get that from, Quest?"

"Old man," David returned, "my question came first."

Banjo finished pouring, a big dose and then a very little soda water. Then he put down the glass, "Right," he said pleasantly, but not looking at David; "it shall be answered."

He went to the door leading to the kitchen and opened it. Immediately beyond it was a baize-covered sound-proof door which he had had fixed there but which, as he frequently grumbled, was invariably hooked back. It was hooked back now. "Keep this shut sometimes," David heard him remark to whoever was within. He closed the baize door, sliding a little bolt on his own side. Then he came in and closed the other door. Then he walked back to his drink and drank the better part of it. Then he spoke.

Still quite quietly, but now with a depth in his tone such as David never before had heard in it, "Your question," he said, "was: What is this between Lady Heritage and me? Now listen carefully to my answer, Quest, because though I say it quietly, I mean it like steel. My answer is, What in hell has that to do with you?"

David got up. "Banjo, apart from all else that it might have to do with me it has this — that you are my friend, the first friend I made when I came here six, nearly seven years ago, my close friend all that time, the friend I have liked — loved — best of any I have ever had. What concerns my friend concerns me. Now then, Banjo?"

But Banjo's face, dark when he had spoken, remained dark while he listened. He said, "Steel, I said, and I mean steel. You may keep your friendship," and he took up again his glass.

David shot out an arresting hand. "Ah, cut that stuff out of this, Banjo. Stand up to this like a man. I don't want that stuff to answer me, I want you to."

Banjo set down the glass. "How were you put on to this?"

"You have been watched."

"Where?"

"In London."

"By Pelham?"

"Not by Pelham."

Banjo gave the sound of a laugh. "That means, friend," —the noun had bitter emphasis— "that you will not say by whom. Well, you can keep your secrets. It is nothing to me. If every 'tec' in London, if all Ashton Parva, watched, I don't care" —he snapped his fingers "—that! Not a row of damns."

David said, "Banjo, would she?"

Banjo's face went a shade darker. "Leave her out of it."

"Easy to tell me that, Banjo. I can leave her, Lady Heritage, out of this; but you cannot. If you go down she goes down. You realise that?"

Banjo said, "Quest, you had better go."

"Not yet. Banjo, you have pretended to throw back my friendship on me but I am not taking it back. I am not going to see any man go down without a mighty big effort to pull him out before he goes, least of all a friend, least of all you."

Banjo made an impatient gesture. "Ah, what the devil do you think you can do?"

"Will you talk reasonably?"

"No, I will not discuss the thing at all."

David stood in thought a moment. Then he looked around for his hat and crossing to it took it up. "Well, let it be for the time; but, Banjo, do not think I am going out of this; I am going right into it. I am going to save my best pal, Banjo, and I will go to any lengths to do it."

"Go, man, go!" Banjo said. "You do not know me when I am as I am in this matter. For God's sake, go."

David moved a pace or two then faced towards Banjo again. "Banjo, nor do you know me. I warn you that I will go to any lengths to stop this tragedy. So far as I know it is not known to Sir Pelham. I warn you that if need be I will tell him."

Banjo was supporting himself against the open bureau, legs outstretched before it, hands braced on its edge. From that position he gazed at David a moment, eyes hard as steel, jaws rigid in purpose. Then he said intensely, "Ah, you fool, Quest! You come underhanded into a thing you know nothing about, into what you think is a hole-and-corner illicit love, and you think to bolt me out of it like a rat out of a drain!" He struck his hand against the edge of the bureau beneath it. "Tell Pelham! What in hell age do you think you are living in with your tell Pelhams? Do you imagine I am going to get a girl out of her bedroom window with a rope and go in a chaise and four to Gretna Green with her? Tell Pelham! When the time comes, I will tell Pelham, face to face, as I am with you now. Tell Pelham! Tell who you damn please! He is coming down to Piers to-morrow, if that is any help to you. On Thursday, if this helps too, I am going over there to see Dawn, perhaps to take her, and if I take her, to see Pelham and tell him so first. Tell Pelham! Tell him that. Be my ambassador of my intentions, if you are so mighty anxious to be in this with me! Tell Pelham! Man, publish it in the Press! Have it broadcast." He gave a sound of laugher. "To-night's S.O.S.! Tell Pelham! Good God, do you think I am a schoolboy that you can come here to me with your Tell Pelhams!"

He would have noticed, had he been normal, the something break in David's voice when David answered him. "Ah, I have made a mess of this, Banjo," David said. "I have come at you in the wrong way."

But he was not normal. He sat there glowering, breathing hard, and glowering watched David go. Then, as if,

as happens frequently with a half-caught sentence, he suddenly realised the break in the voice, he pushed himself sharply to his feet and went quickly to the door.

"Quest!"

David, at the gate, turned eagerly and eagerly came back.

Banjo put out his hand. "Can you take that, a blackguard hand?"

David grasped it in both his. "Man, is it not what I have been asking you for, your hand to help you?"

"You cannot, Quest. No one can help a man who refuses to be helped. Look, I just want to say this, and nothing more——"

David stayed him. "Ah, that nothing more! Banjo, by our first jolly meeting in this house, do you remember it, old man? And all that has been between us since, don't let that 'nothing more' close down upon us, as it will in your present mood, before I have got a word in. Tell me something, Banjo—some scrap of how this has come about, if not to enable me to help you, then to let me sympathize with you."

His face, as his voice, his invocation also of that first meeting here, out of which things touching the deeper part of the other's nature had materialised, had an appeal not wholly to be withstood. Banjo's eyes traversed the garden, came back to Quest, dropped to the threshold on which he stood, and there found a way of presenting the something for which he had been asked. He said, "Quest, I will tell you this. I was sitting on this doorstep the day, the very hour, at which Pelham was marrying his wife. Quest, there started then, here, at that very moment, a set of circumstances which ever since have hardened about me like"—he put out his hand and slowly clenched his fingers—"like *that*." He clenched the fist so that all his arm trembled with the pressure. "Inescapable. Inseverable. You cannot get me out of that, Quest. No one can."

David said nothing.

Banjo opened his hand. The nails had left livid marks upon the flesh. "Quest, I am taking a woman, if I take her, from utter lovelessness which is a wrong, to uttermost love which is a right. You may call it what you like and what the coat you wear makes you call it. I call it——" he constricted his fist again—"*that!*"

Quest stood in thought. "Well, I will go now," he then said. "I have shaken hands with you. That is the first step."

Banjo said, "Shake again; but, Quest, I warn you, you will take no other step, not of any avail. Let me say what I was about to say,—the 'nothing more' before which you stopped me just now. When I said, back in the room there, that you could keep your friendship, I meant, and it includes all else I said in my anger, that this is a case, that I am in a position, Quest, when I might be offered and take the friendship of a man of the world. You are not a man of the world. You are a man of God. You cannot do it."

David, with a quick jerk, threw back his head a point. By his action it might have been said that he had been stung; but by the aspect of his face that he had been inspired. The look on his face was as it might have been at that moment years before, relived on the night previous, when he had heard Father Absolute's call and challenge. He said "Banjo, have my 'nothing more' then. I give yours back to you. I am a Man of God, you say, and therefore cannot be with you in this. I say to you that you also are a Man of God—the claim I staked for God the day I came here, and that therefore you cannot do this thing."

Banjo, with a toss of his hand and with a turn away, said impatiently, "Oh, stuff!"

David said, "You may deny it. You will not escape it. Do you remember our talk on faith one day and what I told you—that faith does not arise in a man, as people think,

from him seeking God but because God is seeking him? Banjo, you are claimed. You will not escape."

Banjo shut the door upon him.

David trod home. As he entered his gate, Roddy came eagerly from the house to meet him, eyes shining, a telegram in her hand. "David, Father Absolute! He is coming tomorrow for the night! Starting what he calls his carpet-bagging at Clifton and coming on his way for the night — if we will have him!"

CHAPTER XIII

STABLE SECRETS

Down comes Father Absolute, and David and Phillipa and Jumbo meet him at the station and find him travelling third class because, as he explains, they will not take him by goods; and wearing under his greatcoat his cassock and on his head his biretta because, as he says, lots of soldiers and sailors are travelling about on Christmas leave just now, and he likes to show that he can cut a dash in a uniform too; and carrying, sure enough, a carpetbag, partly, he says, because it is the only bag he has, partly because he has only had it twenty-six years whereas, as he points out, he has been carrying his bones in the same skin for over eighty, and partly, as with air of concealed triumph he draws David and the girls to the back of the platform mysteriously to whisper, because it helps to remind him all the time of the title that has recently been conferred on him.

"Title?" exclaims David, wild with delight at having his old chief again. "How can you mean title?"

"Ah, my dear fellow," cries Father Absolute, looking hurt, "does no news reach you down here? Have none of you, not even you, Jumbo, heard that they have made me a Q.O.B.?"

"Q.O.B.?" None of them even knows what it means.

"O.B.E. perhaps," suggests Jumbo. "Order of British Empire."

"Order," says Father Absolute disgustedly, "of Boiled Eggs! Do you suppose a man doesn't know the initials of his own honour? Q.O.B., I tell you — Quaint Old Bird, if

you must have it spelt out for you"; and then he declares to David that "a quaint old bird" is how the young people without background are speaking of him amongst themselves, and how delighted he is to have won the endearment of them, and how he feels that his carpetbag helps to present him as quaint old bird flapped out of his barn yard for an airing.

Yes, he is leaving the stable for three weeks, he tells, as they go along to the vicarage, all lugging the carpetbag in pairs in turn—"For I never ride if I can walk", says Father Absolute, "though I must have a car to-morrow, by the way, David, for I have to catch the express at Laversham, nor walk if I can stand up in a crowd and bray." Three weeks, he goes on, covering the Christmas holidays, when lots of young people are in their home towns, and an invitation having been sent him to come down and give some addresses from a pulpit in Clifton—"Which is part of Bristol," explains Father Absolute, "which is where the merchant-adventurers used to start from with their ships, so which seemed to me a rare auspicious place for this adventurer to start from with his carpetbag. And presently, much fun and exchange of old times meanwhile, "Ah, there's my loveliest lady missioner that you stole from me, David!"; and there is Roddy come glowing to the vicarage door to meet them; and presently the children are bade to lug the carpetbag up to the room prepared for Father Absolute, and there to open it and get out some mysterious parcels which astoundingly have got into it, Father Absolute says; and then for five minutes, before the parcels are opened and the treasure hunters come whooping down with them, the one-time missioners and their old chief are alone together, eye to eye, heart unto heart.

Father Absolute has Roddy by her arms at his arms' length and steadily is looking upon her. "My child, my child, a little older, but we all grow old; some sickness

traces here, but we all fall sick; but those same eyes, seeing, I always know the mark, what I suggested once to you that they should see, do you remember?"

"Father, have I ever forgotten? 'My child, see a Cross,' you said."

He drew her to him and kissed her forehead, "My child, it is standing on your brow"; then turned with his grave smile to David.

"And what is our old David showing, Roddy? He is showing thin, you know, showing scars. You have had some fighting, David; heavy fighting by the look of you, old David. I saw the wounds the minute the train stopped. Sore wounds, old David, sore wounds, eh?"

Roddy saw the wounded man much moved. "Father," she said, "you have come, as we believe, to bind them up;" and then David found his voice.

"Father, you came, to me, to bind them up two nights ago, as I believe."

Father Absolute said, "Two nights ago?" He puckered his brows, "Sunday?"

"Sunday, yes. Were you thinking of me on Sunday night, Father?"

Father Absolute, still puckered, cleared his brow with sudden opened eyes. "I was! It happens that I was thinking of you — deeply. I had had a curious visit that week, very curious; I will tell you of it; and Sunday evening I was sitting thinking of it and my mind went to ——"

Sounds as of a horde of savages, complete with war-whoops, discharged down the stairs, interrupt him. "Ha! Here they come with their presents! Old David, we will bind up all your wounds to-night. We will talk the morning in!"

Well, morning comes late on these December days, but their sitting would have taken them near to it, had the season been summer. The early hours are striking when at

last they go to bed and it is a happier, stronger man that goes upstairs in David's shoes than any night of all the years here in Parva vicarage has seen. He tells Father Absolute all, from Admiral's death to Keepsake pulpit outbreak, to his cry of defeat before the altar, to his vision of Father Absolute, to Miss Pasture's coming to him, to his feeling, born by the conjunction of the vision and by her coming, that now the tide has turned; and he is led through it all, guided, comforted, supported, drawn on, maintained, bound up, by Father Absolute's voice, by his eyes, by his strong hand laid on his and pressing his and the hard places are gone over. He does not tell of the Banjo crisis. He intends to; but that, which would have come readily and at once, had this meeting been one of many meetings in which the things of day to day come up, stands at the far end of all that has betided since last he and his old chief met and is not reached when Father Absolute, his comfort given, his reproof of "You close-fisted old David, keeping all your troubles to yourself instead of sharing them with a pal" administered, is launched onto gossip of himself, of his old work in the mission and of his new work in the stable, which David drinks in as only can drink one who has been shut from such for years of isolated loneliness.

All the news of the mission he remembers so well he is given, and experience after experience, anecdote after anecdote then, "stable-secrets" as Father Absolute calls them, of the campaign launched from the Chelsea stable, of which he knows nothing but of which the more he hears the more he encourages Father Absolute to tell. He hears about the addresses to the wild young things who have no background and to their elders who have too much — "so lost away in it, David, that they cannot even see the foreground where the young things are kicking themselves to death" — addresses which began to empty benches and now have to be held with open doors; and of the notice on his door

"Office hours — all hours Day or Night", and of the young things who take advantage of it and drop in, sometimes when coming away from their cocktail parties, sometimes even in early hours coming away from their night clubs, just to see if the Quaint Old Bird really can be got out of bed any time one likes; and of how they sit and smoke their cigarettes and fire their hard young cynicism at him. "Ay, and who come, in time, to shed it, David — no background, no background, that is all it is with 'em; and I give 'em background and they begin to see things as those that have eyes to see."

David could not have enough of it. "Ah, not just yet, Father; not just yet!" he would cry when, at the end of each recital, an eye at the clock, "Well, David——" Father Absolute would begin; and Father Absolute, lenient at sight of the other's restful happiness in this unaccustomed companionship, would yield "Well, just ten minutes more." But the "Well, David——" was uttered finally at last, and Father Absolute determinedly up on his feet with it; and final would have been but for David, despairingly clutching, catching a straw of recollection. "Well, but wait; half a half a moment, Father. You have told me plenty but, do you know, not yet the one you promised when the children interrupted us when you arrived. You were thinking of me that Sunday night, you said, and were going to tell me why — some visitor you had had——"

Father Absolute shook a genial fist. "David, you are of the family of the horse-leech crying 'More! More!' Well, you shall have that one, positively the last stable-secret, and proper secret too, because I don't even know the name of the owner, but I refuse even to sit down to it. You shall have it because, as I said, it brought my mind to you and because, many as are the visitors to the stable, that one was the first and only of his kind. A man it was; one of my elderly clients, but come to me not as parent about his

child but as husband about his wife. David, it was an interesting case, yes, it really was, David — I really think I must sit down to it. Here was a man, David, a refined, cultured man, wealthy, I gathered, who I should say had never opened his heart to any one in his life, opening it out to me, when he warmed up, piteously. A tall, dark, aristocratic-looking chap, David; find him in Debrett or in Burke's Landed Gentry I would wager; blue blood showing in his veins and in every turn of his body and pitch of his voice; looking as if he had swallowed a poker at some point of his life; and giving me the suggestion somehow, immediately he came in, that it was hurting him and that he wished he could get rid of it.

"Would not tell me his name; walked right in on me about three o'clock one afternoon last week, Thursday, I think, and, having introduced himself by saying that he wouldn't introduce himself, began that he had been reading an article of mine in a newspaper and reading an article about me printed alongside of it, and 'You explain, as I gather, the riddle of modern youth?' he asked. 'Well, I make shots at it,' I said. 'And have reconciled young people to their homes?' he asked. 'Well, I have turned a door handle here and there, I believe,' I said. 'Do you think,' said he speaking very stiff as though it hurt him to ask it, but very slow as though it hurt him to have to endure it, 'Do you think that you could explain the riddle of a wife; do you imagine that you could reconcile a wife to her husband?' 'Well, I am eighty-three,' said I, 'and I haven't learnt yet what I can do till I try. Sit down. Do you smoke?'

"My young lady friends are for ever leaving their cigarette cases lying about and I handed him a jewelled one but he declined it. 'I reprobate the habit, except in smoking rooms,' he said. 'Reprobate,' David! There's a word to set a modern young woman's teeth on edge in this age that speaks no English but only slang. 'Does your wife smoke?'

I asked, putting the case aside. 'It happens she does not,' he said. 'It happens,' eh, David? Stiff, oh, I tell you his tongue was as starched as his collar; but I saw a way of moistening him there. 'Ah, well, come now,' I declared, 'if she does not smoke either, we have got one point in common to work on'; and at that, David, sure enough he did give just the palest ghost of a smile; and before he left, but he was with me two good rounds of the hour hand, I had got that pale ghost flickering on his face more than it had done in many weeks I would say.

"David, his was a quaint, sad case that he set before me. It was, though he had not a notion of it himself, first and last and all the time just what I have already told you of him — that he could not open his heart to any one, never had, all his life, did not know how to, had repressed all his emotions pretty well ever since he knew what emotions were and now hadn't got a syllable to let 'em out on; didn't know the language, didn't know there was a language, I believe. I gathered he was something of an art collector, and though I never had met one before, I had met dog fanciers in plenty around our Mission — so have you; remember young Tyke Bates? — and horse dealers not a few, and I daresay these art fanciers are much the same breed, never show by the quiver of an eyelid that a thing they want is worth more than tuppence a pound; and I would say that this attitude had got under this man's skin and into his blood and affected all his emotions the same way. Schooled himself never to give himself away before a picture or a china plate, you follow, and, without knowing it, had sealed himself up into not being able to give his feelings away before anything, from a woman to a waiter.

"Yes, but where to goodness does his wife come in, in all this, you are asking, David. Old David, she comes right into this jam, this dam, this impasse of emotions, right

into the graven-imaged, sphinx-faced locked-up, marble-fronted inarticulateness of it all, and it defeats her (that is what I told him) and she gangs off on her own gait, the poor, foolish, cynical gait that all my poor young fillies go, and that defeats *him* — that was what he told me; and that was what he had come to me about, do you see, his defeat by the change he observed in her, his absolute inability to understand the why and wherefore of it. He told me a few things illustrating what he called the change, and I used him the same expression as I have used to scores of mothers who tell me of their daughters. 'She has grown cynical,' I said. But his reception of it was very different from its reception by the mothers. Invariably they sigh and agree — but he! 'Cynical!' he cried, outraged as if murder had been the crime I had laid against her. 'Cynical!' He dives for his pocketbook and picks out a photograph and hands it to me. 'Could you conceive of cynicism behind a face like that?' sings he.

"David, I could *not*. This photograph had been taken, he told me, a week or so before, and this was a photographer's first proof of it, and he was carrying it about with him (do you mark the significance of that?) and from the way it was thumbed was having it as much in his hands as in his case; and, David, I was reluctant to let him take it back out of mine. I have seen some lovely young creatures in my time, and more, and lovelier, during these months at the stable than most men will see in a lifetime. But this! This girl wife of his! Oh, man, there was that about her loveliness that made you catch your breath at it, as you may catch it at that ethereal quality there is about a garden in the first hour of a summer morning. Was it Viola for whom a star danced and she was born? David, I would say that morning breathed and this most rare and exquisite thing whose picture he showed me was born. 'An exquisite — soul,' I said; and paused before the word soul to show

him that I knew such beauty could no more shine but from within than the face of a watch mark the hour but for what is in the case. 'Why, of course, of course!' he cried, 'When you said cynicism, or lest you should suggest any shortcoming equally impossible, I knew I had but to let you see her face. How should there be any virtue wanting with such a face as that? There is not a grace, not an estimable quality but you can trace it there, and there, and there.'

"David, while he said 'there, and there, and there', he was touching the photograph with a finger tip, caressing it, as you might say, and speaking almost more to himself, or to her, than to me, as it might have been a mother adoring above her infant's cot and touching the gifts that the fairies had brought to its christening. That was the way that man loved that wife of his. He worshipped her, David; and his trouble, and her trouble, was that he did not know how to express his worship. He was losing her, I could see it clearly, as soon as we got to the bottom of things, just because he had not the glimmer of a notion how to put out his hand stop her going."

"Profoundly interesting, Father," David for the dozenth time declared. "You certainly have kept the best to the last. What a psychological study, a proud man like that loving, adoring, like that, and keeping it locked like that because incapable of doing other, and then coming, broken as you might say, to you to help him."

Broken, Father Absolute agreed, was the word. "David, I would say he was the type who never breaks at seeing another broken, and when that type gets broken it breaks hard. He was numb and dazed with what his heart was suffering. It was pathetic to see him."

"And what did you give him, Father? What was the prescription?"

"Why, to unlock himself, to let himself go, to tell his wife 'what', says I to him, 'she probably has not an idea

of — that you love her. Let me see the picture again,' I said; and when hard and long I had looked at it again, 'Yes, she is starving,' I said. 'That wistful look, that — that vague, that troubled yearning in those eyes, that is for love, man; not passionate, not sex-ly love, protective love, helpful love, strengthening, succouring love, the very love that her young inexperienced years could find in your experience. In marriage,' I said to him, 'it is only poverty of love that matters to a woman.' And, David, that was where precisely the connection between this interview and you came in. Because those words as I said them had a familiar ring in my ears; and running over my week's cases on the Sunday night — I keep a little book, you know, and on Sunday night always run over it — I thought of him and of those vaguely familiar words and remembered then that it was to you I had used them, when you were trying to frighten yourself out of marrying Roddy. Remember?"

"If you used them, Father," said David, "with half as good effect to that man as to me he will have reason to bless you."

"A wise old bird," smiled Father Absolute, "as well as a quaint old bird. Well, we shall see — if my unknown visitor ever thinks fit to tell me. But if he does as I advised, and I make no doubt whatever he will, all will go — go as blissfully as you and Roddy, I am sure of it. 'Give her love, man,' I sent him away with. 'Tell her, man, *tell* her! No good whatever in telling her you love her' (as he had told me, David, that on two occasions he had) 'after a scene in which, to her way of thinking, you have just been proving that you don't. Tell her when there has been no scene! Tell her when you say good morning to her; tell her when you ask her to pass the salt; tell her when you ask her if she knows whether the post is in yet; tell her when she asks you if there is anything in the papers this morning; go right home and tell her now, now, the minute you see her. Say,

"Oh there you are! I was looking for you. I love you."' And he gripped my hand, David, in a way I would say he never had permitted himself to grip a hand before and said he *would.*

"And I say to you, David," concluded Father Absolute, springing up from his chair with the decision of a man who is out of it once and for all and for ever, "that unless you want your throat gripped till death us do part, you will not keep me out of bed one single quarter-second longer. What time is breakfast? Eight? And that car coming for me at nine? Right. Up we go, shoulder to shoulder!"

And at nine next morning, the car coming for him, off he goes, carpetbag beside him, kind old voice breathing in words the blessings that his visit has brought in personal fact. His last words are with David, spoken through the car window; and while he is at them, Roddy is opening a Christmas packet which the postman, while they stood about the car, has handed her. He comes so rarely to the vicarage, that postman, that Roddy cannot resist immediate opening, takes out a photograph and, "Oh, how too sweet of her!" exclaims. "And how lovely! David, Lady Heritage has sent me her photograph, taken while they were in town. She promised she would and she has." The car is moving off. "Look, Father, look"—and she hands the picture to David, standing on the running board. "Have you *ever* seen a lovelier face?"

It would appear that Father Absolute never has. He is caused to start as he sees it, he bends over it as though it has an interest amazing; and amazing, as he hands it back and as David prepares to drop off the moving car, is the word he uses. "Why, David," he says, "this, this is amazing. You know her? Whom do you say she is? Lady Heritage? Does she live here? David, that is the photograph of his wife that visitor showed to me on Thursday afternoon!"

The car, disappearing, leaves one standing there, hand to mouth, eyes, staring before him, seeing not what is within their vision but what may be within the compass of this knowledge, thus amazingly come to him. What had Banjo said? "Taking her, if I take her, from utter lovelessness." What if Banjo were to know that it would be from uttermost love that he would take her?

David brought down his hand that in action of tense speculation he had held against his lips, and as he lowered it clenched its fingers in gesture of resolve. It was a fist, hard as Banjo's when it came to his side; and he turned with a vigorous movement and strongly went up the drive to Roddy.

"Roddy, I am going to Piers."

"David, to Piers!"

"Yes, to see Sir Pelham. Come inside, Roddy, and I will tell you."

CHAPTER XIV

DAVID AT PIERS

David had told Roddy while they were getting up, two hours before, of Father Absolute's concluding stable secret of the previous night; he told her now, to her amazement, of the revelation, through Dawn's portrait, of the identity of the protagonist of that secret; and he told her then, to her consternation, that sole part, touching Dawn and Banjo, of what had happened in the church on Sunday night, which till now he had kept from her.

"I did not tell you before, Roddy, because I wanted to see Banjo first. I thought it might be a man's business that could be talked out best in a man's way and that after we had talked it out there might be nothing to tell; and then at the start I made the mess of it that I have just told you, and at the end was faced with that iron front of his from which I came away, and again I felt that I would wait again until I had talked with him. There are things that a man feels somehow are man's things; and when Banjo, when I mentioned Lady Heritage, lashed out, 'Leave her out of it!' I had the feeling more than before — to leave you out of it and her out of it and keep it a man business if I could."

Roddy perfectly understood; she always understood.

"But this most wonderful discovery," David went on, "and what I have made up my mind to do out of it, that wants your opinion — and you do agree, don't you?"

" David, I am sure it is right."

" So am I. Another reason " — he permitted himself the faintest smile in a matter so grave — " that I had to tell you was because I felt I couldn't very well, as a married man, put my head into the lion's mouth at Piers without telling my wife in case it gets bitten off in the process."

Her smile, as his, was of the surface only. " David, I am convinced it is the thing to do. Banjo, as you say, will never take what you now can tell him from you; if you can make it come to him from Sir Pelham, I do believe, with you, that he may hesitate."

" And in this case he who hesitates," cried David, " may be — saved, Roddy! "

Her animation partnered his. " Yes, and they are our, your people, David. Your people for you to save, David. Oh, things are coming out for you, my dear, at last. There *was* a reason for your coming here! "

He kissed her. " Now I am going. If I get this train at Kington Berger, it will give me an hour for the walk out from Laversham to Piers. That will get me there just before lunch, which is awkward, but if Sir Pelham will see me at all, he will know it can only be for as short as he chooses; and if he will give me just five minutes —— "

But Pelham Heritage, to the accumulation of emotions in David which best can be described as causing in him a full heart, gave him minutes very many times the multiple of five. David, arrived at the castle, heartening himself in the last moment before he put his hand to the bell with the thought " After all, if he had the courage to go and see Father Absolute, surely I can screw the nerve to see him ", sent in his card and, as it appeared to him, had scarcely seen the footman go through a door with it when the man

was back again. "Sir Pelham will be glad to see you, sir."

"Glad!" David thought, following him to the door from which he had come. "Do these men servants always put that in?"

But the word, to his astonishment, was used by Pelham himself, standing midway in the room, David's card in his hand, and coming towards David, greeting outstretched, as he entered. "I am glad to see you, Mr. Quest," he said, "very glad. Quite recently you were in my mind. I remember — my memory is one of my prides — your telling me that you once served under Father Absolute, and ——"

"He was with us," David said, "at the vicarage last night."

Pelham's expression, which had been kindly, put out a quick look. "Ah, is he staying with you now?"

"No, for the night only. He left this morning."

The quick look was maintained. It bore also a shot of suspicion. "Do you come to me from him?" Pelham Heritage asked; but in the same breath, and before David could reply, himself answered his own question. "But no, it is impossible that you should. He does not know me." Relief absorbed the suspicion from his eyes and when it was his turn to speak again, he took David up with his earlier geniality of manner.

"No, it was on a — a personal matter that I ventured to call," David said; and "Well, it comes well", was Pelham's reply, "whatever it is, from a friend of Father Absolute's. I had occasion last week —" he corrected himself "— my attention was drawn last week to his work, to what he calls a campaign that he is conducting and I have found myself very greatly interested. One of the most remarkable men I have m — heard of, I think."

"He is!" David cried enthusiastically. "He is the greatest of men. This campaign of his, started long after

most men have retired from active work, is a wonderful thing. He was telling me last night ——"

A footman was in the doorway. "Lunch is served, Sir Pelham."

"But I must not keep you," David said. In the astonishing friendliness with which he had been received, in the congenial turn to which the conversation had immediately been taken, the trepidation in which he had come, almost indeed the matter upon which he had come, had passed from him. Now he was to go, and going, launch his matter, and his trepidation returned, full armed. To collect himself, "I must not keep you," he repeated.

Pelham Heritage made a step towards him and put a hand beneath his elbow. "No, but I must keep you," he smiled. "You must stay to lunch. I am much more interested in this Father Absolute than you imagine. When I am interested in a thing I always go straight to the fountainhead for information. You were one of his assistants, you have just been entertaining him, what better fountainhead? Come —" as David made the conventional excuses —"I will not be denied. Are you ready to come straight in? Straight in then."

And with his hand still beneath David's elbow, he passed him through the door in front of him.

The thought in David's mind as he traversed the great hall to the great dining room was — the astounding, the bewildering change in the man! He had scarcely seen Pelham Heritage, never, at that, but in swift or in distant passing, since that interview in the vestry years before; but he never had forgotten the aspect of iron, the voice of steel, that then had been presented to him. With acid it had been bitten into the tablets of his memory as an engraving on a plate, and often when the wolf that had dogged him pressed him close, he had seen it burning down

upon him as shapes are seen by one haunted of fears. Now! "Locked-up" had been Father Absolute's opinion of him; and what had been Father Absolute's advice to him in the extremity in which he had come to Father Absolute? To unlock! To — *"Tell* her, man! *Tell* her!" Had he done so? Had he unlocked on that dimension and, relieved, unstifled, set free, unlocked on every other dimension also? It was arguably possible. At the first sight of his face, before, at David's entry, he had spoken, David had noticed the change. He had stepped into the room expecting to see a countenance frozen, locked. He had seen immediately a nature melted, open, having the air of one who meditates on happiness.

"My wife," said Pelham, as they entered the dining room, his voice bringing David back to things practical but his words anew and more strongly yet returning him to changes wonderful, "is out. She is lunching with the Flogg-Wallopers. You know them, no doubt?" He seated himself and looking up at David, carried on with laugh. "Yes, we quarrelled sharply on the question of her going, I insisting that she should, and she not wishing to, as I was not after all going to be detained in Laversham as had been the case; and we shall quarrel worse when she returns and finds that I have had you here to myself. She is great friends with your wife, I think. How is your wife?"

Changes wonderful!

David knew sufficient of the relations between this man and his wife, from little things dropped by Roddy, from dry remarks of Banjo's, to say nothing of what had come from Father Absolute, to be astonished, not only at the affectionate references now made, but at the playful tone in which they were pronounced, the talk, in banter, of a sharp quarrel — language of equivocation such as any cheerfully happy young husband might use but the last to

be used by such as the Pelham Heritage who had gone to Father Absolute to have resolved for him the cause of an incompatibility more separating than any open quarrel; an incompatibility continuous and increasing, not spasmodic and sure to die away. This was a new, a rejuvenated Pelham Heritage.

And in his new self Pelham continued throughout the meal, sober in speech and thought if the matter in discussion was sober, light — for him — if it were light; but always with a human interest, whatsoever the subject. It mostly was Father Absolute. "That," as Pelham smiled when David protested that he was doing all the talking, "is what you are here for. Tell me more of him, and of yourself, in the Mission days; more of what he has told you of what he calls his stable days. He has opened a new world for me — I mean," he corrected himself, "a new world is revealed to me by what you tell me of him and of his work. I did not know there were such men. I did not know there were such lives as those you tell me of." He stopped and he added then, "I believe that somehow I have missed a great deal, Mr. Quest, in life."

He stopped again, staring now sombrely before him along the table, rather as if, David thought, he were visualising the great deal that he had missed. "And, Roddy," David telling it afterwards said, "a strange thing then. His eyes lifted a little and settled on the place laid, but not occupied of course, opposite him. And a smile began to come so delicately and so tenderly on his lips that it jumped at me that I was seeing for the first time in my life a thing scribbled meaninglessly in every book you read. His smile, Roddy, and looking at his wife's place, remember; his smile — *Dawned!*"

And it was with its dawning, as though its light rolled

away inertia of darkness and restored action of day, that Pelham, recovering himself with a start, had looked at his watch — the meal long since finished — and jumped to his feet. "Heavens, I have a man come to see me must have been waiting half an hour! I by whom people set their clocks!"

David also rose.

Now!

"Sir Pelham, all this time ——"

Pelham gave a concerned gesture. "Ah, all this time I have been making you pay for your lunch and what you came to see me about has never developed."

"Yes," David said.

"Is it something," Pelham asked, "that I can do for you? I am in mood, to-day, to hope that it is."

They were standing midway between table and door and David looked at him steadily. "It is," he said. "I have come to ask you if you will see, if you will grant an interview to a parishioner of mine."

The steady look, the steady voice, seemed to issue warning of a weighty thing, and Pelham's face set to receive it. But when the words were out, a smile was reception suitable, and he smiled pleasantly. "But that is nothing at all," he said. "Of course I will. Who is the parishioner? Any one I know?"

David's hand felt for the back of a chair beside him and found it. "One you know very well; your half-brother; Banjo."

He had expected to see start of surprise; but Pelham did not start nor was surprise an element of the look he bent deeply upon David. It was a measuring look: the look that says, "How much is known here and how, at all, is it known?"

He said, "What is the meaning of this request?"

David's fingers were nervous on the chair-back. "Sir Pelham, it has no meaning that I am at liberty to tell you."

"And what is the meaning," Pelham asked, "of that?"

His voice was in consonance with his look, measuring, fathoming; grave, intense, but no way hostile; and David took courage. "Banjo," he said, "is my friend. He is in difficulty, in trouble; and I think his trouble might be resolved if he were able to see you. That is all I can tell you."

"Does this suggestion," Pelham inquired, "emanate from him?"

"It does not. He has not an idea that I am making it."

"Does it emanate from any one?"

"From no one. It is my own solely."

Pelham turned away and paced the width of the room. A window was before him and he stared through it. Then he came back. "Mr. Quest, did Father Absolute send you here?"

David flushed. "He assuredly did not."

Pelham appeared to notice the flush. He said, "Mr. Quest, more often than once, through this unexpected meeting of ours, I have been trying, precisely because it was so unexpected, to trace possible connection, but it has appeared to me impossible, between Father Absolute and your coming here. Is there any connection?"

"Your name," David said, "was not mentioned by Father Absolute."

Pelham said, more to himself than aloud, "No, he did not know my name," and he turned again and went again towards the window.

Half-truths were in the air, an atmosphere detestable to David. He went up the room. "Sir Pelham, let me tell

you this of Father Absolute and the bearing of his visit to me on this visit of mine to you. Father Absolute gave me cases — cases of troubles that had been brought to him in his new work; and I imagined, or I supplied instances — known to me; cases, shall I say in point?"

A considerable pause; their eyes joined.

Pelham asked, "Among your parishioners?"

Again and as considerable the pause; their eyes still joined.

David said, "Yes, among my parishioners, present — or former."

Pelham drew a breath. "I will see Banjo," he said.

David shot out an impulsive hand. "Ah, how delighted I am!"

His hand was received, silently but strongly. They went from the room.

As they crossed the hall, "He may come," David asked, "to-day?"

Pelham said gravely, "Yes, to-day."

"At what time?"

They were in the great Tudor arch of the doorway; a car standing before it.

"Time? At any time. No, wait. Between now and dinner will be difficult for me. We dine at eight. If he cares to run out as late as nine or later, I shall be waiting him." He took David's hand. "I am running you back in the car. Oh, it is nothing, a long way to the station and a villainous train service. The man will take you to the vicarage."

David, his thanks expressed, would have turned away, but he was held by the expression on Pelham's face, the look of a man having further to add and inwardly recalling it, or debating it. It appeared to be found by link of the

last word Pelham had spoken — vicarage. " How are you all finding the vicarage? " he asked.

David said, " Oh, well enough, Sir Pelham."

Pelham's eyes dropped from David's face, ran down his person to his shoes and up again. " It is not a sound place," he said, " in my recollection of it." His mind still appeared to be debating matters. " How are you doing in the parish? " he asked.

David, who had seen the examining look, flushed. " I believe," he cried, " that I am going to do great things. It takes time, of course, a long time, but I believe I have served my time."

" Mr. Quest," Pelham said, " I have the idea that I am going to be very greatly indebted to you." He smiled gravely at the disclaiming gesture made by David, and he went on, " Well, indebted, shall I say, to Father Absolute and to one of his training. You speak of having served your time. I shall bear you in mind, Mr. Quest, next time I am meeting our Bishop; I know him well."

David, utterly taken aback, was in a sense not less taken aback at the words that came leaping to his own mouth. " Ah, no," they stammered out, " Sir Pelham, if I take your meaning, and with every gratitude, still, no, no. My work is here in Parva. I have work to do there. It is only beginning. It is my work, waiting for me. I have waited for it, and now, at last — You understand? You see what I mean? "

Pelham took him to the car. " I think that I understand very well. I am fond of that little church, Mr. Quest. I would like to have you there, for a few years, at all events. Do you know, I had the idea at one time, if the advowson ever came to me, of building a new vicarage on the hill just above you, a delightful site there."

David was in and Pelham was closing the door. " Yes,

I am fond of that little church. I have always wished to attend there." He stood back for the car to move away and smiled. " Make a note for me, will you, of how long the run takes to the church? "

CHAPTER XV

CAPE, OR CORNER, OF GOOD HOPE

David stopped the car at Banjo's cottage and sent it back from there. The time occupied by the drive, of which, with an intention clearly implied, Pelham had asked him to take note, was little over half an hour; and twice the period had not been sufficient for him to emerge from losing himself among the wonders of the visit from which he now was returning — wonders witnessed, revealed, and wonders promised, to be revealed. But as the car brought David from castle to cottage he was not exploring those wonders. He had not left the gates terminating the long avenue of the castle approach when he put from his mind what had been and drew into every power of his mind what was now to be. The transition from one to the other was, by coincidence of a common prayer of his, a natural and immediate transition. It was David's lifelong habit when he received blessings to return thanks for them, not in the conventional phraseology of gratitude — a terminology that a sense of assumption, albeit unconsciously, of the attitude " Well, I have said thank you for that," made distasteful to him — but with the sentence, fervently implored, " Help me to show in my life my knowledge that these bounties are from Thee."

As the car moved away from Pelham standing in the castle doorway, that was David's prayer, reiterated upon each separate incident of the interview; as it reached the

gates he passed from " Help me to show in my life " to concentration upon and preparation for that interview to which now he was proceeding — a call, strong and immediate, to show that which he besought help to show.

His plan of action was, above all, to be brief. For Banjo's salvation he had two things to say to Banjo; and he desired to say them, to present them, and then to go, leaving them to work what influence under God they would in the claim which, as he had told Banjo, he had staked for God the day he came here. To present them, lay them, go. To be led into argument would, he was assured, be fatal. This Banjo whom he had grown so greatly to love was a soul, he knew, loving, gentle, kind, but at the same time passionate, striving, restless, wayward, hungry. To argue, to plead, would exasperate and infuriate him; and exasperated, the claim would rend and hurl from it the talents that were to be laid within it.

He found Banjo seated at his writing table. Drawers of the table were open at his either hand. He appeared to be sorting and destroying papers.

He twisted about a genial smile at David and David had a mental envisagement of the look that would take that smile's place when he spoke.

He spoke immediately.

" Banjo, I have just come from Piers."

He had expected a black and iron setting of the face turned genially towards him. He was astonished to see, rather, the geniality of the smile increase. Banjo put his right hand on the arm of his chair, got himself up, stepped, smiling still, to David and putting his hands on David's shoulders, held him in smiling, arm's-length regard. " Why, you diabolical old villain, Quest! " he smiled. " Quest, you walloping little sneak, you! I wouldn't have believed it of

you! I never imagined when you threatened it that really you would."

He gave David the tiniest little playful push away and folded his arms and from that easy, entirely unperturbed pose spoke again.

"And what now?" he inquired.

"He wants," David said, "to see you."

"*Does* he? He may whistle — if he can whistle, which I should be inclined to doubt. And what, precisely, did you tell him, Quest?"

He was still smiling, but his smile was now less pronounced. His utterance of "*Does* he?" had fallen from him weightily, not as words drop from a smile. As if the interpellation of Pelham into the matter had caused a coalescence in what had been malleable, his lower jaw, as he uttered it, had slightly tensed, his eyes a shade hardened. While he went on with "He may whistle", the smile still was evident; but when he reached "And what precisely did you tell him?" it was no more than hovering, as flicker of white wings seen distantly above a dark and brooding sea.

"I told him," David who saw the change said steadily, "nothing. I simply asked him if he would agree to see you, and he said he would at any time, preferably at nine o'clock to-night."

"Very good of him," said Banjo, "uncommonly good of you." The smile had gone. "And what the devil do you suppose we are going to say to one another?" The quick irritation of a man heavily beset sprang about Banjo's face as a flame about tinder. "What is behind this?" he cried. "If you say you told him nothing, what fool's game is this that you think you are up to?"

"Banjo," David said, "do you remember using to me on Monday the words that you would be taking her, if you took her, from utter lovelessness which was a wrong?"

" Perfectly well. To uttermost love, I added, which is a right."

" She has that right — at Piers."

Banjo said impatiently, " Now what do you mean? "

" Banjo, Sir Pelham loves his wife —— "

Banjo gave a scoff. " Ah, you are pure fool."

" Devotedly."

He scoffed again. " Completest fool; that is what you are. Who told you this? Pelham, I suppose? Good God, Quest, can you really have been such a fool — I don't say you had not pluck in doing it, fools have — as to go to Pelham and say ' Please, Sir Pelham, do you love your wife? ' and then come bounding down to me to tell me he said ' Yes '? You are cracked, man."

David stood his ground. " I did not ask Sir Pelham, nor did he tell me. I will tell you who told me. You have heard me speak of Father Absolute. Have you heard by any chance, of the work he is doing now? "

Banjo contracted his brows. " Father Absolute? Now where the devil are you getting? Father Absolute? "

" Well, have you? When you were in town? "

" Yes, I have. You mean the man who has been running some stunt in a Chelsea chapel? I read about him. I had an idea once of going to hear him. What about him? "

" Last week Sir Pelham went to see Father Absolute."

Banjo was incredulous. " Pelham went to see Father Absolute! "

" Father Absolute was my old chief in my early days. He spent last night with us and he told me."

Banjo said between lips that seemed not to move to emit the words, " What has this to do with this yarn of Pelham and Dawn? "

" It has everything to do with it. Sir Pelham went to Father Absolute to tell him that he loved his wife, devotedly — and was losing his wife."

David stopped to receive the effect of this, but he received nothing. Banjo's face was iron. He uttered no word.

David said, " I will tell you the whole of it — exactly what he said to Father Absolute, exactly what Father Absolute said to him. May I sit down? "

" You may lie down," Banjo said, " if you like."

Himself he went back two paces to the settee, dropped upon it, thrust out his legs, and with chin on breast, hands in pockets, listened while David told. Throughout the recital he made no comment, gave no sign. His eyes were never on David's face. They were directed as the chin dropped upon his breast directed them; and when David finished and got up, still he did not raise his eyes nor make any movement of his body.

David was on his feet. " Well, then," he said, " I went to Sir Pelham, told him nothing, asked him only if he would see you. Banjo, everything of this that you have had from me you have had at second hand. I knew that would not satisfy you. Banjo, go up to Sir Pelham to-night and get it at first hand."

He waited a moment or two. No movement of any kind on the settee. He went to the door and before he passed through it stopped again to look. Still the motionless posture, the immobile embodiment of a soul plunged into cogitations recondite, profound, unfathomable.

David trod home, lost to all else but this which, for its own resolution, he had left behind him. He had almost forgotten, when Roddy came eagerly questioning, what it was that had happened at Piers. Then he said, " Oh, Roddy, the scales weighted for me, for us; for Banjo, Roddy — balancing."

They still were balancing when, not until ten o'clock, Banjo went to his garage and ran out his car. It had been shortly after three when David left him. For nearly seven

hours he had been either sitting as left, or, moving, had carried his body about trifling affairs, his mind remaining plunged in those fastnesses of its preoccupations. He had been, when he was moving, as a man waiting before the mouth of catacombs in which another man obscurely gropes. At four o'clock Paddock had come in to set tea. Banjo was as David had left him. At five Paddock had returned to clear, and, knowing Banjo, still seated as when tea was laid, had cleared. At half-past seven he came with dinner, Banjo had not moved from the settee. Paddock had not dared speech but he had added to the noises of his service the continuous coughings and clearings of one who apprehends thunder in the air and who thus heartens himself against its sudden breaking, and Banjo was sufficiently disturbed to be made aware of what was toward. In a little while he got up, soiled spoons in dishes, rubbed food about plates, then rang the bell. When Paddock entered, he found Banjo now at his writing table, deeply pondering apparently a letter that lay before him. As Paddock left, Banjo took pen and wrote an answer to the letter, enveloped, addressed, stamped and sealed it. Then he got up and put the letter into his pocket. " IF " he said aloud. Then he went back to the settee.

The appointment, if he was to keep it, was at nine. At half-past eight he said " Let him wait! "; at nine he twitched his lips together; at ten he got up with a swift movement and went out to his car. The night was strongly moonlit but if any one, approaching him, had remarked upon it he would have looked around and up at the moon. It would have been news to him. He was on his way now to see Pelham, but if any one had asked him with what intention he was going to Pelham he could not have given an idea. He had not an idea. He had been sitting all these hours gazing at a fact: " Pelham loves Dawn." It had been, as it were, the wall of his cell

at which a prisoner sits and gazes, as dominant, as inscrutable, as passionlessly sphinx-like; and he gazed at it still, observing nothing else, as it stood before him in the headlights of his car. The lodge gates were open. He ran up the avenue, stopped on the far side of the wide expanse in which it terminated, and got out and stood and looked across at the great pile of the castle towered up before him, thrown out superbly as wings of an eagle on either hand.

He was heir to all this!

He gave a little twist of laughter and walked across to the great arch of the doorway and put his hand up to the bell. Strange thought! He was heir to all this! Pelham, much older than himself, seven years childless, was likely to die childless. Pelham, comic thought, was holding all this in trust for him! Ah, Pelham, impoisoned thought, was holding, not in trust for him, but by trust of every law human and divine from him, that with which all else in the world, in life, was as this castle compared with his cottage. " Pelham loved Dawn."

The butler opened the door and evidently was expecting him. " Sir Pelham is waiting for you in the library, Mr. Heritage," he said.

The library, both by its appointments and its design one of the notable features of Piers, was a superb apartment, framed in fine bindings, hung with noble paintings. Pelham, as Banjo entered, was standing back to the great fireplace, his hands behind him. His shoulders were slightly bowed, a bookish stoop; across the scholarly refinement of his face the concealed lighting of the room cast one shadow that might have been an artist's touch. Banjo's thought, as the opening door revealed Pelham to him thus, was that he fitted the composition exactly. He was part of it; born out of it; born for it.

The two had not spoken for more than ten years.

Banjo, as the door whispered behind him, came delicately forward; Pelham, releasing his hands to his sides and raising his head, made a vague forward movement. But neither advanced a hand and Banjo stopped in few paces.

"Hullo, Pelham."

"Hullo, Banjo."

Banjo looked about him. "You have had this place ordered up out of believing," he said, "since poor old Jim was here."

"It deserved it," Pelham said.

"You certainly have proved that it did." Banjo was turning this way and that, examining. "It was scarcely used in Jim's time — just a knock-about sort of place for rags. Last time I was here, Jim rode his polo pony round it. It lashed out and ——" Banjo turned sharply and eyed along the wall that had been behind him.

Pelham gestured a hand towards the moulding beneath a bookcase. "It is there," he said. "Irreparable. I have often wondered how it could have been done."

Banjo paced now. He went the length of the room on the side opposite from Pelham, pausing, as if in excuse, before each picture; then he came up on Pelham's side, similarly pausing.

Pelham watched him.

There was no ornament in the room save those that were of it, but as Banjo came to within few feet of Pelham he saw on the great writing table that stood there a single ornament. It was a large photograph frame, facing towards him as he came. The photograph was of Dawn. Banjo came close to it and stood gazing down upon it. He stood thus a very considerable time. Pelham watched him.

Then Banjo raised his eyes from the face of his half-brother's wife and directed them upon his half-brother. "Pelham," he said, "do you love Dawn?"

Pelham moved each lip against the other. "Banjo," he said, "because I know something of the circumstances which have led to your coming up here and because I think I am seeing things differently from the way I have customarily seen them — because of that I will say to you what it is an outrage to my wife and an outrage to myself to be called upon to say to any man. I love Dawn. I love her fondly, devotedly, utter ——" He broke off. "But at least I need not suffer the humiliation of adorning what I tell you. You ask me, do I love Dawn? I say to you I love Dawn."

Banjo said, "So do I."

Pelham said, "I know that."

The words of the two, clear but low, charged by what they carried each to each with burden enormous in its import, but uttered with the inflection of no emotion whatsoever, scarcely could have been heard across the room. Banjo continued to hold Pelham's eyes a moment, an exchange also supercharged from within, also of no perceptible emotion from without. Then he dropped his eyes to the table at which he stood and maintained them two minutes, not at the portrait from which he had raised them to this interchange, but on a delicately contrived silver basket in which lay letters for the post. He put his hand in his pocket. "Will a letter there," he asked, "go by first clearance to-morrow?"

Pelham said, "It will."

Banjo drew from his pocket the letter which he had written that evening and let it fall, from a height, into the basket. "Well, that," he said, "is that;" and as if his knees suddenly had given beneath him, and with a thud that was the first discordant sound since he had entered the room, he dropped heavily into Pelham's writing-table chair, standing immediately behind him.

If notice was to be taken of that, Pelham did not take

it. He took up, instead, the words spoken. " May I know? " he inquired.

If Banjo had suffered distress, he appeared immediately to recover from it. He drew himself by the elbows of the chair upright, with his back upright against its back. He put his head the tiniest shade to one side, a familiar poise, and there flickered across his face, touching lips, eyes, the little lines at the corners of his mouth, the tiniest suggestion of the characteristic whimsical smile which Pelham many a time in days gone by had hated.

For a reason he could not have discovered, not now.

" I am going," Banjo said.

As he was in a house from which clearly he must shortly go, nothing of moment was necessarily in this observation, and Pelham therefore questioned it. " Going? " he questioned.

The whimsical smile might be said to have danced a pace or two.

" Going away," Banjo said.

Pelham's voice took a deeper shade. " Going away? "

The smile certainly danced. " Miles away; leagues, oceans, continents, hemispheres away; in point of fact, to South Africa. I am going from here to-morrow, first thing; I am going out as a ship's doctor and when I get there I am going to stay there. As they say in the best film English, it's me for the open spaces."

Pelham's hands by his sides were very slightly trembling: " Why are you going, Banjo? "

The flickering smile withdrew. Banjo slid a little forward in his chair and thrusting out his legs and drooping his head, assumed something of the position in which, deeply brooding, he had been sitting at his cottage the greater part of the evening. When he spoke it was with the voice of one telling aloud to himself the things that his eyes, brooding, saw. " Why are you going? " he had

been asked. He said " Pelham, because the one thing in this business that I never reckoned on has happened and has beaten me. I have imagined you coming at me with murder in your eye and I have wished fervently that you might, and I have imagined one of us swinging for the other and have not cared tuppence which of us it might be; and I have imagined suicide as a way out and there is at this moment in the cupboard in my room a length of rubber tubing which I bought, and saw it was the right length and that it fitted, to reach me lying down in my garage from the exhaust pipe of my car; and I have worked out on paper as an actuary might the chances of your death, but you don't hunt like the little Admiral and you don't yacht like poor old Jim, and they seemed to me pretty good, and I have, wished, yes, I have wished solid, that I could somehow accelerate them. I have thought all ways over this business; but they say that every murderer makes one slip and I certainly made one big omission — it never occurred to me that you loved Dawn."

For the first time since he had begun on this he raised his eyes to Pelham's face. " Pelham, I would have gone to any lengths, got down to any depths, to get what I wanted with every fibre of my body and with every pulse of my mind, because what I wanted was what I thought you did not want and because I could give what I thought you could not give. But take a thing that is loved: no, I am sorry — for myself — but that is a thing I find I cannot quite do."

Pelham crossed from where he stood and took a chair that faced Banjo's across the table.

Banjo turned to him in that position. " Mind you," he said, " I had a glimmer of this a little while back and it shook me, damn it, then. And, Pelham, as we are talking pretty straight and on my last night in these parts for ever, let me tell you for the sake of some one we both love

that I had a stronger glimmer of it a week ago, exactly a week ago to-morrow, and I learnt two things — one that Dawn did not love me as I loved her — but might. The other that Dawn, because her heart is the exquisitely child-like heart it is, had a sense towards you, which might not be love, perhaps only duty, but which might be love."

He sighed. "Well, those were the glimmers and they shook me but I — I shook them. Now comes strong light, your love for her; devoted, utter, I believe it, I can see it ——" The whimsical smile fluttered upon his face again and his voice took sudden, brisker note. "Too strong, that light, for me, blinding, piercing. I cannot shield my eyes, Pelham, I must carry them away — I'm off."

Pelham said, "Banjo — shall we shake hands?"

Banjo cried out and thrust his hand across the table, "Ah, let us, for God's sake!"; and while their hands were joined, "For God's sake all that has been between us ended!"

Pelham told Banjo some things between himself and Dawn happened in the week that would be, as Banjo had said, "exactly a week to-morrow." When he had told much an interval seemed to have come, "Well, shall we go on talking?" he said.

They had drawn the straight-backed chairs in which they sat away from the writing table and towards the hearth. "Let us just sit a bit," Banjo said reflectively, his eyes on the fire, "and shoot out things if they come up, shall we?"

Pelham smiled at the phrase and adopted it. "Yes, and let me shoot first. What about when you get out there, Banjo?"

"All ready and waiting for me. At this refresher course I have been taking — Dawn told you that, you said?"

"Yes, last night."

" Yes, well, I got very pally with a chap come over from Rhodesia to do a course. He and a brother have started a private hospital up country there and are making a mighty good show of it, from what he told me, mighty good. They want an assistant, a partner if mutually suitable, and he took a fancy to me for some reason and pressed the job on me. Any time before the New Year he gave me to decide in. I shall cable him to-morrow."

" Banjo, that sounds capital."

" It is capital, I think."

After a little — " Banjo, my manners! Will you have a drink?"

Banjo said, " Curiously enough, I will not." Looking into the fire, " Where I get off the ship in South Africa," he went on with apparent inconsequence, " is Lorenco Marques, East Coast, you know, round the Cape. I suppose this night is the first real crisis I have ever been up against and it has knocked me right out and, funnily enough, knocked out my usual rush for drink; too big for drink to be of any use, I guess. I have always said that if only I could get round the corner I could keep on down the straight. That cape is my corner; and as I am booked for it now, it starts now. Cape of Good Hope it is, mind you. That is what Dawn and I in the language we talk sometimes would call a good O — a lucky omen. You must get her to teach you that language, Pelham."

Presently he said, " I would get a hunter or two into the stables, Pelham."

Pelham said, " We are going to the Leicester place, or to Tattersall's, immediately after Christmas. Would a string of four carry her the season, do you suppose?"

Banjo thought handsomely. He gave a rueful little laugh. " I wish to God I could be one of 'em!"

Presently he said, " Pelham, what would you say this

was worth to you — this happiness you are to have with Dawn, this clearing out of me?"

Pelham said, "Worth?"

"In cash."

"In cash? This is some joke, of course. How possibly could ——"

Banjo brought up his reflective eyes from the fire. "Well, but name a figure. Would it be worth, would you say, a couple of hundred a year or so?"

Pelham said, "Banjo, do you need money?"

Banjo said, "No, but I know some one who does; some one but for whom I should not be here now, Pelham, nor what has happened between us to-night ever have happened — that little vicar of yours down at Parva, Quest."

Pelham said with note of feeling unmistakable, "You may make yourself perfectly easy about Mr. Quest, Banjo."

Presently Banjo said, "Well, well," and got up. "I think I have shot all my shoots. Good-bye, Pelham."

"Good-bye, Banjo. When do you sail?"

"Saturday, from Liverpool. I have some kit to get. I shall push off by the 8:10 in the morning."

"What about the cottage and things?"

"I shall leave all standing with the Paddocks, then write instructions from S. A."

"To me, Banjo."

Banjo's eyes looked inquiry. "What, am I to write to you?"

"Banjo, we have only just established touch, do not let us lose it."

Banjo put out his hand. "Good-bye, old man."

As they passed into the hall, "Will you mind if Dawn has my little car to run herself about in?"

"She will love it, Banjo."

"Good; you will tell her?"

They were midway in the great hall and Banjo making

towards the entrance. But Pelham put arresting fingers about his arm and drew him to his left. " No, you can tell her."

Banjo checked, " I? "

" You are not going without saying good-bye to Dawn, Banjo."

Banjo stared at him. " What? "

" I insist."

" After what you know? "

" Because of what I know."

" Does she know I am here? "

He had been led by the hand on his arm to a door.

" She is here in the little Dower Room, waiting for you."

Pelham put his hand to the door and opened it. Banjo's face was working. " Well," he said, with twist of smile, " we shall be under your eye."

" But you will not be," said Pelham; and admitting him, closed the door upon him and turned away up the hall to await him.

POSTSCRIPT

THE Dowager Countess Vestibule goes on, it is now generally accepted in society, for ever; and so, naturally, do the Intimate Memoirs of Miss Mention. Here is Miss Mention at them, at her dressing table, a muffin-shaped hat pendant above her on each side of the mirror, her muffin-shaped head above her manuscript on the cleared space before her, her pen, in the style which, as with all notable authors, is her own style, plunging——

To Piers Castle, stately home of Sir Pelham and Lady Heritage, with Dowg. Count. V. for week-end and v. delightful. Would call them enchanted couple in enchanted home; v. beautiful to see way in which Lady H., young, fresh, *lovely,* seems to turn *naturally* in everything and *with* everything to Sir Pel; v. beautiful his worship and yet *guidance* of her. Lady H. out hunting when we arrived; and Sir Pel, who does not hunt, rode out to meet her to ride back with her; *hacking* out, he called it, but his steed did not kick, am glad to say, while we watched him start off.

Dinner part. in evening. Usual difficulty in catching names correctly but caught Sir Cropp and Lady Flogg-Walloper, Dr. Creek, Mr. Medwyn Paradise, Miss Pasture, Mr. and Mrs. Distaff and vicar of Ashton Parva and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Quest, and their two *quite* young girls — much too young, I would have thought, for a din. part. but Mr. Paradise, a most *informative* man, told me that Quest family practically *live* in castle, which, by intimacy between them all and the H.s, could well believe.

Quests and Dr. Creek first arrivals and much animated

talk about Sir Pel's half-brother Banjo who apparently is partner in a private hosp. in Rhodesia and is on his way home for holiday and all greatly excited about it. Is coming to Piers Castle and all these then assembled — Heritages, Quests and Dr. Creek — appear to have plot afoot to keep him, once he arrives, in partnership with Dr. C. Much flattered by Sir Pel turning to *me* and saying, " Do not you agree, Miss Mention, that I ought to insist on having my heir under my eye instead of in another continent? "

Replied earnestly, " Yes, especially where there are wild beasts and dark men."

Taken in to dinner by Mr. Distaff, an *author,* who, recognising, I have no doubt whatever, *a kinship of the pen* between us, talked to me throughout the meal with *Passionate* earnestness of his latest book ' Lost in Lumpopo ', an inscribed copy of which he is going to send me — a tribute paid by authors *not,* I think, to *every* one they meet.

On my other hand Sir Cropp Flogg-Walloper, a man of very striking and impressive appearance. *Not* a great talker. Spoke only once to me and then so suddenly and so loudly that in the jump I gave my accessory teeth became disengaged and I could not for the moment reply.

Turning upon me, as I have said, quite suddenly, he demanded " D'ye hunt? " and, distressing as was the shooting loose of my accessory teeth, the necessary interval while I adjusted them with my tongue was invaluable, for it enabled me to excogitate a singularly clever, and quite truthful, reply. Considerably flattered at being taken for a *hunting* person, but not wishing, if I said I hunted, perhaps to be forced into a hunt before we left, I replied, " Not in the *winter.*"

Our chat was unfortunately terminated here because the words were no sooner out of my mouth than Sir Cropp was seized I think with some sort of terrible spasm, becoming quite bright purple and swelling, and his eyes

bulging in the most alarming way, and I naturally, though regretfully, had the good taste to turn away.

On Sunday morning all to church at Ashton Parva where Sir Pelham read the lessons. Had been prepared for considerable congregation as Mr. Paradise had told me that Mr. Quest has great reputation as preacher and draws the curious from all parts of the county; but certainly was surprised at number of cars outside church, and, together with villagers, church simply crammed. Mr. Quest, according to Mr. Paradise, is not expected to be here much longer; but I can scarcely imagine he would ever wish to go, much less ever be *let* go. Sermon certainly very *appealing,* a very *simple* way of expressing very *appealing* ideas; and all the service very bright and delightful; excellent choir and I was personally in very good voice, causing one or two to look around.

Lunch, after service, at the vicarage, Miss Pasture, who had played the organ, also present and with her her brother. Had wondered who he was for had seen him blowing the organ for her and had noticed how at every interval he came round to join her and how she always looked up and smiled as he came. They appear greatly attached to one another.

Lunch a delightfully friendly meal and the vicarage a quite charming little house built on the hill overlooking the old vicarage and containing every sort of charming attraction and convenience. Mrs. Quest showed me round it with pride which certainly would have been mine had *it* been mine. The children, home for the holidays, are all at good schools, a little boy going when old enough, and they keep a small car, so I imagine the living, as is the case with some of these quite small places, is well endowed. It certainly, judging by all I observed at lunch, is endowed with *happiness.* I would not have credited from the laughter and chaffing that it was a *clergyman's* board.

Banjo Heritage, the heir, and the possibility of his

settling here when he arrives, was again a subject of discussion, and was discussed again as we gave the Pastures a lift to their house on our way back to Piers. He is evidently much liked by all. At the Pastures' we got out for a few minutes to have a look around. Miss Pasture keeps chickens in a small way and used to do so on quite a large scale. A man they employ who, when I first saw him, I thought to be carrying a beehive on his head (but it turned out to be a no doubt local style of straw hat) told me that in days gone by he had taken as much as a half hundredweight of eggs to Laversham market. He had lived in Ashton Parva all his life, he said, and I was much struck by his reply when I said to him that he must have seen many changes there. It is wonderful how shrewdly and tersely these rustic minds can summarise a thing.

"That's just it!" he said.

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